MARVEL

FANTASTIC FOUR

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FANTASTIC FOUR

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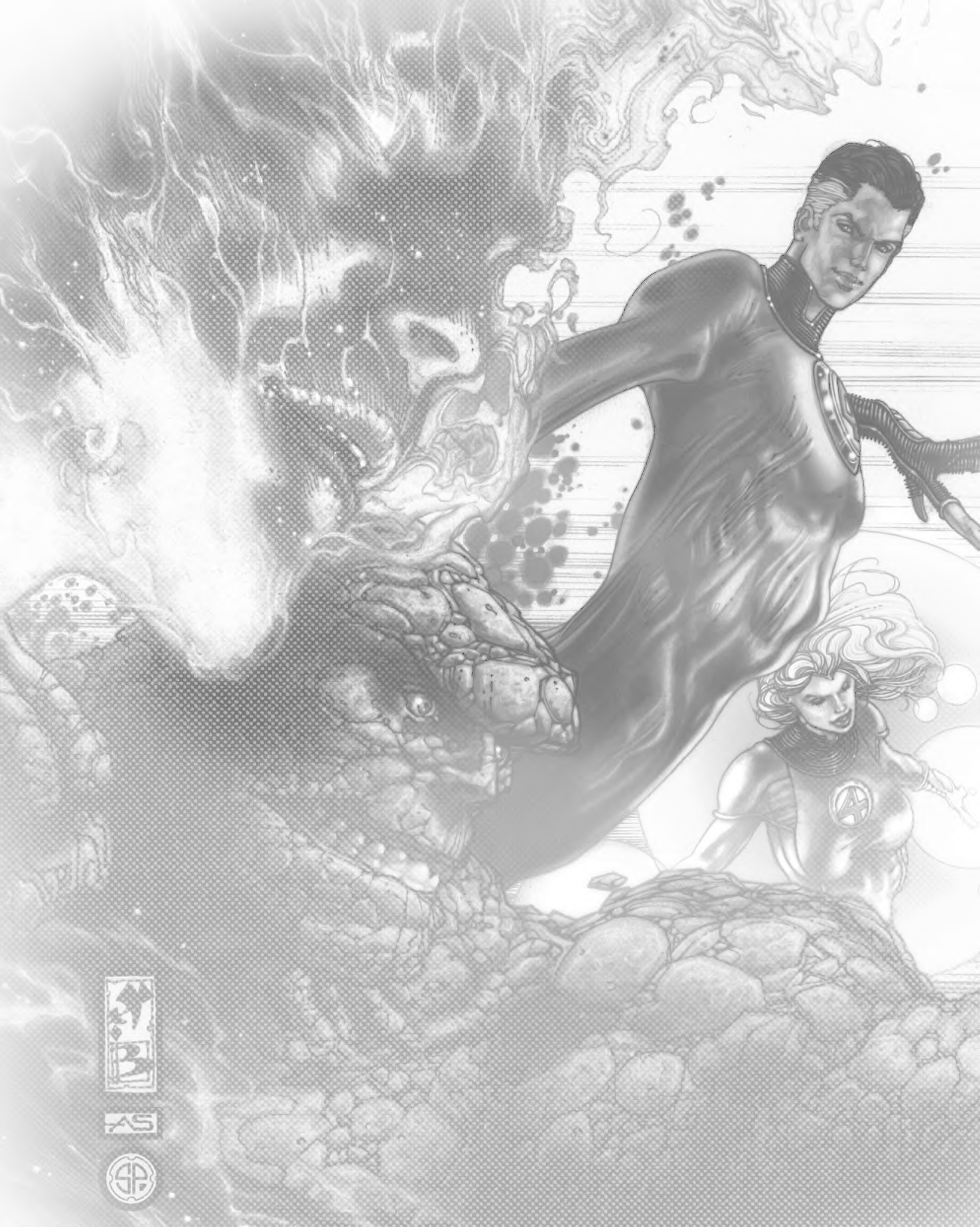
PRELUDE



THE BAXTER BUILDING. HOME AND HEADQUARTERS OF THE **FANTASTIC FOUR.**

IT BEGAN A WEEK AFTER THE SKRULL INVASION.

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE BRIDGE

CHAPTER ONE

IT'S WHAT HAPPENED THREE DAYS AFTER NORMAN OSBORN TOOK CONTROL--THE DAY THE FANTASTIC FOUR RETURNED TO THE BAXTER BUILDING.

IT WAS THE DAY I COMMITTED MYSELF, CROSSING THE *THRESHOLD*...

AND A MOMENT OF CLARITY DEFINED WHO I WAS.

A MOMENT OF *TRUTH*. A SINGLE *FACT*.

I CAUSED ALL OF THIS.

AND ALL OF HUMANITY, MY FAMILY...MY CHILDREN, THEY SUFFER FOR IT.

Phone

FANTASTIC PLAZA

THEY LIVE IN A WORLD I CREATED.

WE'RE ALMOST HOME.

SO STOP POUTING, VAL...

MOM SAID SHE'D HAVE ALL NEW STUFF IN OUR ROOMS BY THE TIME WE GOT BACK.

YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED.

HOW MANY TIMES CAN A GIRL HAVE ALL HER STUFF DESTROYED BEFORE IT BECOMES TRAUMATIC?

AND WHAT'S WITH THE COWBOY GET-UP, FRANKLIN. WE LIVE IN MANHATTAN-- YOU KNOW, MODERN SOCIETY?

YOU'RE CRAZY, PARDNER. LAST WEEK, HALF OF OUR BUILDING GOT DESTROYED, MOM WAS REPLACED BY ALIENS AND WE GOT SUCKED INTO THE NEGATIVE ZONE...

THIS IS TOTALLY THE WILD WEST!

...SNIF!

TELL HIM HE'S NOT A COWBOY, ALICIA.

I'VE ALWAYS SAID YOU CAN BE WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO BE...

BUT, FRANKLIN, DON'T YOU THINK PLAYING WITH GUNS IS SENDING THE WRONG MESSAGE?

I DUNNO, BEN...

NO! ABSOLUTELY NOT!

YOU KEEP RIGHT ON MOVIN'!

I DON'T THINK I'M BEING OVERLY MATERIALISTIC... I DON'T.

BUT REGARDLESS OF HOW MUCH WE DON'T WANT TO BE LABELED BY THESE THINGS, THEY DO, IN FACT, SAY SOMETHING ABOUT WHO WE ARE AS A PERSON.

IT DOESN'T GO THERE, EITHER!

I'M NOT SAYING I'M ANY LESS OF A PERSON, OF COURSE I'M NOT.

BUT IF YOU TOOK AWAY THE RACE CAR FROM A FORMULA ONE DRIVER, IS HE STILL A *RACE CAR DRIVER?*

AWWW, THAT'S NOT GONNA FIT IN...

I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT AND IT SCARES ME.

...HUH, WHADDAYA KNOW?

MAYBE I CAN'T EVER RETURN TO BEING THAT GUY. MAYBE I WON'T EVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.

WHAT ARE YOU BLABBERIN' ABOUT?

I'M A MAN WITHOUT A MISSION, BEN. A PERFORMER WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE...

....WE'RE GETTING ALL THIS COOL NEW SWAG, AND ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT IS HOW I LOST THE PHONE NUMBER FOR EVERY SINGLE, HOT, AND NEEDY WOMAN IN THE CITY.

WELL, HERE'S TA STARTIN' OVER, KIDDO.

:SIGH:

UNBELIEVABLE.

JOHNNY STORM! BEN GRIMM! WHY ARE THE TWO OF YOU SITTING AROUND WHEN THIS ISN'T FINISHED YET?

AWWW, SUZIE, C'MON-- LIGHTEN UP.

THE DOOMBOTS ARE DOING A BETTER JOB THAN WE WOULD, AND BESIDES, THE KID'S GOT ISSUES.

IT'S TRUE. I'M A BIT DOWN, AND YOU'RE A GOOD FRIEND. I DON'T TELL YOU THAT ENOUGH.

SEE WHAT I'M SAYIN'?

I DON'T CARE.

YOU BOTH KNOW I WANTED THE HOUSE READY FOR WHEN THE CHILDREN GOT HOME. ***WE*** ASK FOR THESE THINGS TO HAPPEN TO US, ***THEY*** DON'T...

AT LEAST I GOT THEIR ROOMS FINISHED.

FIRST, THE KIDS ARE TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK.

SECOND, YOU SENT THEM OUT WITH ALICIA TWO HOURS AGO. WE'VE GOT FIVE FLOORS OF FURNITURE, WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR PERSONAL STUFF--OKAY, NOTHING THERE-- AND REED'S SCIENCE JUNK TO MOVE.

IT WASN'T GONNA HAPPEN, SIS.

AT LEAST REED IS TAKING CARE OF ALL THE IMPORTANT CHORES.

THERE YOU GO, LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, RIGHT, BEN? BEN...

BEN?

HEY, UH...GUYS... WHERE'RE ALL THE THINGAMAJIGS GOIN'?

THE IMPORTANT THING IS THIS...

YOU CAN'T LIE TO YOURSELF.

GUILT HAS A WAY OF OBSCURING THE OBVIOUS--IT LIMITS YOUR VISION. THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS WHEN ASSESSING A SITUATION ARE THE FACTS.

YOU HAVE TO PUT EVERYTHING ELSE ASIDE.

IF YOU CAN DO THAT, YOU LEAVE ROOM FOR INSPIRATION TO STRIKE.

A FRACTION OF A MOMENT WHEN CONFLICT MEETS RESOLUTION AND THE PATH BETWEEN THE TWO IS ILLUMINATED.

I SHOULD'VE KNOWN.

YOU TOO?

IT ALWAYS BEGINS THE SAME WAY...

I HAD AN IDEA.

REED!

I KNOW, I'M SORRY. I HAD THE BEST OF INTENTIONS.

I MADE A LIST.

SEE, I WAS GOING TO FINISH THE NEW HOME SECURITY PROGRAM AND BRING IT ONLINE, I DID ACTUALLY RE-PURPOSE A COUPLE OF H.E.R.B.I.E.S INTO A HOVER HORSE FOR FRANKLIN...

AND, WELL, THE LIST HAS TWENTY-SEVEN OTHER ITEMS ON IT...BUT THEN I GOT DISTRACTED. I HAD AN IDEA.

I BUILT A TWO-POINT SINGULARITY POWER SOURCE TO DRIVE THE UNCERTAINTY ENGINE I'VE BEEN WORKING ON, AND THEN I CREATED A VARIABLE IMAGER TO ACCURATELY INTERPRET THE DATA FROM ALTERNATE REALI--

HERE WE GO.

DOES ANYBODY BESIDES ME EVER GET TIRED OF FEELING LIKE THE DUMB KID IN SCIENCE CLASS?

JOHNNY.

YEAH?

WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT YOUR GRADES.

IT'S ACTUALLY AN OBSERVATION DEVICE TO SEE HOW PROBLEMS LIKE OURS WERE SOLVED ON OTHER EARTHS.

NOT SMALL, IS IT?

BIG PLANS, BEN. BIG MACHINE.

THIS IS THE BRIDGE.

AS I WAS SAYING, IT'S GOT ITS OWN POWER SOURCE WHICH NOT ONLY ENERGIZES THE MACHINE, BUT GENERATES A CONTAINMENT FIELD FOR THE SURROUNDING AREA.

THE MATH'S RIGHT, BUT I'M SLIGHTLY WORRIED ABOUT SPILLOVER, SO I'LL HAVE THE BUILDING'S GENERATOR SUPPLYING AN INDEPENDENT, REDUNDANT PROTECTIVE FIELD.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT UNCERTAINTY HERE.

TODAY? THIS HAS TO BE TODAY?

WE'RE ALL SLAVES TO INSPIRATION, SUSAN. BUT THIS IS BIGGER THAN THAT.

I HAVE TO KNOW WHY EVERYTHING HAS GONE SO TERRIBLY WRONG.

BUT REED--

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU TOLD ME: MY MIND IS A GIFT?

THAT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN'T DO. I BELIEVE THAT.

I'M SUPPOSED TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE, AND THE TRUTH...THE *TRUTH* IS IT IS NOT THAT AT ALL.

B
A
X
HAMMER
HAMMER
OUR ORDERS ARE CLEAR.
PENDING A DIRECTORATE REVIEW, THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED FROM THE INITIATIVE PROGRAM AND TODAY THEY GET *SHUT DOWN.*
RESISTANCE IS EXPECTED, SO GET ARMORED UP.
NOW WHO'S IN THE MOOD TO SHOOT UP SOME SUPER HEROES?
GO! GO!

THERE WILL BE VARIATIONS IN SPACE-TIME. HOURS AND MINUTES WILL MOVE DIFFERENTLY IN THE BRIDGE--HEY, WE COULD GET LUCKY AND I'LL ONLY BE GONE A BRIEF MOMENT.

REED, I--

ENOUGH, SUZIE...MAN'S GOTTA DO WHAT HE THINKS IS *RIGHT*.

AND YOU'RE SO SURE THIS HAS TO BE HANDLED RIGHT NOW?

MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

THEY TEND TO BE OVERLY CONCERNED WITH HOW DIFFICULT THEIR CHOICES ARE, OR THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THEIR SPECIFIC PREDICAMENT, OR IF THEY EVEN HAVE IT WITHIN THEM TO FIND A SOLUTION IN A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME.

AND WHILE, FOR MOST PEOPLE, THESE ARE VALID CONCERNS, THEY OVERSHADOW THE REALITY OF A SINGLE INHERENT TRUTH...

THERE'S NO PROBLEM THAT CAN'T BE *SOLVED*.

I KNOW THIS.

I ALMOST LOST ALL OF YOU THIS YEAR.

I MADE SOME CHOICES THAT DIRECTLY LED TO THE DEATHS OF SOME OF OUR FRIENDS AND ALMOST TORE THIS WORLD TO PIECES...AND FOR THE LIFE OF ME, I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT WENT WRONG.

YES, THIS HAS TO BE HANDLED NOW.

WISH ME LUCK?

I DON'T LIKE HOW THIS FEELS...

YOU'LL HURRY BACK?

WELL DEAR, TECHNICALLY I WON'T BE GOING ANYWHERE.

REALITY WILL SHIFT AROUND ME, I'LL APPEAR TO DISAPPEAR, BUT I'LL ACTUALLY BE STANDING IN THE EXACT SAME SPOT.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.

I WILL ALWAYS COME HOME.

HE'LL BE FINE.

WE, ON THE OTHER HAND, STILL HAVE FURNITURE TO REARRANGE.

CRASH!!!

HANDS UP!

PULL UP THE FLOORPLANS. NOW!

WHAT THE... H.A.M.M.E.R. AGENTS!

NORMAN OSBORN'S FLUNKIES.

AND THE KIDS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE HOME ANY SECOND.

LET'S GO...

I WANT THIS OVER TWO MINUTES AFTER WE HIT THE LOBBY.

C'MON! C'MON!

THANKS, ALICIA.

ZZZZZZZZKK!

GATOR

CUTTING POWER TO THE GENERATORS.

THAT'S STRANGE.

OH MAN, WHAT'S THAT?

DAD.

EMERGENCY LIGHTS SHOULD COME ON IN A...

...MINUTE.

THEY CUT THE POWER?

DO THEY SERIOUSLY THINK CUTTING THE POWER IS GOING TO STOP US FROM...

I'M SO NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THIS.

EASY, KIDDO--SMALL SPACE, LESS HOT.

SO WHERE DO YOU GUYS THINK WE ARE... AROUND THE FIFTH FLOOR?

YEAH, THERE-ABOUTS.

OKAY. BEN, YOU TEAR US OUT OF HERE. JOHNNY, YOU GET DOWNSTAIRS IMMEDIATELY. WE'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

HERE WE GO...

OH, CRAP.

THE TRUTH-- A *FACT.*

CIVIL WAR, ILLUMINATI, SECRET INVASION, AND NOW, WHAT HAS FOLLOWED...

I CAUSED ALL OF THIS.

AND ALL OF HUMANITY, MY FAMILY...MY CHILDREN, THEY SUFFER FOR IT.

FIELD HAS STABILIZED.

THE BRIDGE IS FUNCTIONING PROPERLY.

OKAY... HERE WE GO.

LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT EVERYTHING.

THEY LIVE IN THE WORLD I CREATED...AND I WILL FIND A WAY TO MAKE IT *RIGHT.*

THERE'S NO PROBLEM THAT CAN'T BE *SOLVED.*

MOVE AND I SHOOT.

WHAT THE...?

I MEAN IT, MISTER.

NOT ANOTHER STEP.

CUTE KID.

THESE ARE THE CHILDREN, RIGHT?

UH-HUH. WHERE'S YOUR MOM AND DAD...

FRANKLIN. THE BOY'S FRANKLIN--GIRL'S VALERIA.

WHERE'S YOUR MOM AND DAD, FRANKLIN?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYWAY.

HUSH, VAL. I'M BEIN' SERIOUS HERE.

I'M TRYING TO SCARE THEM OFF.

OH...GREAT PLAN, FRANKLIN. YOU SHOULD SAY SOMETHING TOUGH.

GOOD IDEA.

LISTEN UP, BUCKET HEADS. THIS IS THE BAXTER BUILDING HOME OF THE MOST AWESOME SUPER HEROES IN THE WORLD, AND IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, YOU'LL TURN AROUND AND LEAVE.

BUT I'M WARNING YOU--STAY, AND MY SISTER IS GOING TO GET TO WATCH ME KICK YOUR @$%&!

OOOH...YOU'RE GONNA BE IN TROU-BLE.

OKAY, ENOUGH OF THIS.

WE'LL TAKE THEM INTO CUSTODY UNTIL WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH THEM.

OH, NO YOU WON'T.

WHOA!

HEY, HEY...*RELAX*... WE'RE JUST DOING OUR JOBS.

YEAH, WE'RE JUST SUPPOSED TO SHUT YOU GUYS DOWN AND SERVE THIS NOTICE.

NO REASON TO GET *CRAZY*.

I'LL TAKE THAT.

I GUESS THAT WRAPS THINGS UP. HAVE A NICE DAY, OFFICER.

OFFICIAL NOTICE

DOES THAT THING ACTUALLY WORK?

WE COULD CALL THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION WITH IT.

HUH.

MOM AND DAD SHOULD HAVE SHOWN UP BY NOW, OR AT LEAST UNCLE JOHNNY...

...I HOPE THEY'RE ALL RIGHT.

I'M SURE THEY'RE FINE.

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE BRIDGE

CHAPTER TWO

"I DUNNO...

"I THINK DAD MIGHT HAVE REALLY SCREWED UP AN EXPERIMENT."

"WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU THINK THAT?"

"DAD'S USUALLY PRETTY *CAREFUL*, BUT WHATEVER HE'S GOT WORKING IS PUTTING OUT *A LOT* OF EXCESS ENERGY."

"BUILDING IS GLOWY."

YEP.

NOT GOOD.

NOT AT ALL.

BUT DAD'S *SUPREMELY* SMART.

UH-HUH. I'M SURE HE'LL FIGURE IT OUT, BUT I THINK I KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP.

DAD USUALLY HAS BACKUPS IN PLACE IN CASE SOMETHING WENT WRONG, BUT WHAT HE COULDN'T PLAN ON WAS UNEXPECTED HOUSE GUESTS.

OH I KNOW. BAD GUYS CUT THE POWER.

BAD GUYS CUT THE POWER.

SO IF WE FIX THE POWER...

EVERYTHING SHOULD GO BACK TO *NORMAL.*

DEFINE NORMAL, FRANKILIN.

THE BRIDGE

COMPUTER, BEGIN SCANNING IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRE-SELECTED PARAMETERS.

THE FIRST STEP.

THE FIRST STEP TO FINDING A ***SOLUTION*** IS EXAMINING THE FAILED STATE THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO CORRECT.

TO DO THIS I NEEDED TO DISSECT THE EVENTS OF THE LAST YEAR TO DETERMINE IF THEY HAD BEEN DETERRED BY, OR ACTUALLY ***RESULTED FROM***, MY ACTIONS.

IT WAS MY BELIEF THAT TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, I NEEDED TO COMPARE DATA FROM ***THIS*** UNIVERSE WITH SIMILAR EVENTS FROM ***OTHER REALITIES.***

AND THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THIS MACHINE DOES--IT ALLOWS ME TO SEE INTO OTHER 'THENS' AND COMPARE MY 'NOWS' WITH THEIRS.

STARTING WITH WHERE I THINK EVERYTHING BEGAN TO GO WRONG...

THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT.

CIVIL WAR.

WAIT, IF I TURN THE POWER BACK ON--HOW DO WE KNOW THAT IT WON'T MAKE THINGS *WORSE?*

THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T. I DON'T WANNA GET INTO TROUBLE.

BUT WHAT IF I *DON'T* TURN THE POWER BACK ON AND THINGS GET EVEN WORSE THAN THEY ARE NOW?

THEN DO IT... BUT I'M NOT TAKIN' THE BLAME.

ARRR!

WHO CAN MAKE A DECISION LIKE THIS? WHO IN THE WORLD WOULD EVER WANT THIS KIND OF RESPONSIBILITY?

UH, SUPER HEROES?

ENGAGING THE VISUALIZER.

OKAY...HERE GOES.

VARIABLE SPACE-TIME.

VARIABLE SPACE-TIME. COMPRESSING...

COMPRESSING...

SCANNING COMPLETE.

12,435,018

GOOD. NOW, TELL ME HOW MANY VIEWABLE REALITIES--SIMILAR TO OUR OWN--ENACTED SOME TYPE OF LEGISLATED SUPER HERO REGISTRATION DURING, ROUGHLY, THE SAME PERIOD OF TIME?

OF THOSE, HOW MANY RESULTED IN A CONFLICT WITHIN THE METAHUMAN COMMUNITY?

3,008,296

AND OF THOSE, HOW MANY RESULTED IN A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION?

418

PLEASE FEED THOSE INTO MY BRAIN.

FASCINATING.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-155.

IN THIS REALITY, ***REED RICHARDS*** AND ***HANK PYM*** INITIATED THE REGISTRATION ACT.

PYM DIED OF AN ANEURYSM TWO DAYS AFTER THE LAW WAS ENACTED, AND WHILE THERE WAS ONE MAJOR SKIRMISH, 'I' WAS ABLE TO CONVINCE EVERYONE OF THE NECESSITY, AND SANCTITY, OF APPEARING TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE LAWS OF MAN.

POINT OF REFERENCE: EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY THAT TONY STARK NOT BEING INVOLVED IS ONE OF THE COMMON FACTORS IN AVOIDING A PROLONGED CONFLICT.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

IT THREATENS TO TEAR OUR KINGDOM ASUNDER.

OF COURSE WE SHALL NOT ALLOW IT, BUT IT VEXES US NONETHELESS.

WHO ARE THESE PEASANTS THAT CLAMOR FOR EQUALITY?

CONSECRATED BY GOD, BRED WELL AND ADORED BY ALL *HONEST, UPRIGHT* MEN--DO THEY NOT KNOW THAT I *AM* THE LAW?

WHO DARES?

THERE IS ONE AMONG THEM, MY QUEEN. A MAN WITH AN IRON HEART AND A SILVER TONGUE.

HE TELLS THE PEOPLE--*YOUR* PEOPLE--SWEET WORDS OF DECEPTION.

HE TELLS THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR.

AND WHAT IS THAT?

WE WERE ALL BORN FREE MEN.

ALL BEING FREE, WE ARE ALSO EQUAL. NO ONE OF YOU, NO ONE OF *THEM* ARE BETTER THAN THE OTHER.

POOR MAN ON THE STREET, QUEEN ON A HILL...THE SAME.

TO ENSURE THIS, WE MUST SUBMIT, ALL OF US, TO A RULE--A CODE--THAT ENSURES THAT ALL MEN ARE GOVERNED IN FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY.

AND HOW ARE WE TO ACHIEVE THIS?

WE WILL TALK AND DEBATE, AS ALL ENLIGHTENED MEN DO.

TO OUR OPPRESSORS, WE WILL BRING EDUCATION.

AND IF THAT WILL NOT SUFFICE, THEN THERE MUST BE WAR.

A WAR THAT WILL SPLIT THIS KINGDOM ASUNDER AND PIT BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER UNTIL ALL ARE RECOGNIZED AS *RIGHTEOUS.*

IT WILL BE FOR OUR CHILDREN AND THEIRS BEYOND THAT.

I WILL BLEED FOR THIS. SOMETHING GREATER THAN WHAT HAS COME BEFORE AND EXISTS EVEN NOW.

AN IDEAL.

A GREATER SOCIETY.

WHO IS WITH ME?

REPUBLIC!

REPUBLIC!

REPUBLIC!

REPUBLIC!

REPUBLIC!

REPUBLIC!

HEAR THE ANIMALS ROAR.

IT CONFUSES ME...

DO THEY NOT KNOW HOW ***FORTUNATE*** THEY ARE TO LIVE UNDER A BENEVOLENT RULE SUCH AS MINE?

WHEN THREATENED BY INVADERS FROM THE OUTER REALMS, WHO HAS MET THAT MENACE AND EASED THEIR FEARS?

AND NOW THEY TEST ME.

GOOD CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD, WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?

I BELIEVE A CORRECTION IN ATTITUDE IS IN ORDER. THESE PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THEIR PLACE.

IF I WERE BUT TO HAVE YOUR LEAVE...

YOU HAVE IT, SIR.

AND, PERHAPS, FOR THE ARROGANCE OF THEIR ACTIONS, IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THEY PERSONALLY RECEIVED THIS CORRECTION FROM THEIR QUEEN.

I'M IN A MOOD FOR ADMONISHMENT.

AND WHAT SAY YOU, CHAMBERLAIN GRIMM?

MILADY, 'TIS THE CLOBBERING HOUR.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-3490.

THE 47TH PEACEFUL MODEL EXAMINED BENEFITED PRIMARILY FROM THE ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT OF CAPTAIN AMERICA, STEVE ROGERS AND THE IRON WOMAN, NATASHA STARK.

A DETERRENT TO EACH OTHERS' MORE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, THIS ALLOWED THIS EARTH'S REED RICHARDS TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE THE SUPER HERO REGISTRATION PROGRAM AND BEGIN THE FIFTY STATE INITIATIVE.

14932-8

HANK PYM WAS NOT A VARIABLE ON THIS EARTH.

THE NEW SUPER YOU

CASE STUDY: EARTH-1,789,002.

INITIATIVE PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF THE CREATION OF A SERUM THAT GAVE ENHANCED ABILITIES TO ANYONE WHO WANTED THEM.

A STARK CONTRAST WITH...

CASE STUDY: EARTH-26.

WHERE THIS REED CREATED A DEVICE TO STRIP ALL SUPER-HUMANS OF THEIR POWERS.

THIS NEGATES THE NEED FOR AN INITIATIVE PROGRAM, BUT ALSO RESULTS IN THE QUALIFIER 'PEACEFUL OUTCOME' BEING ACHIEVED.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-1735.

THE LAST SUCCESSFUL REALITY SAW THE AGGRESSIVE AND SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INITIATIVE PROGRAM BY THIS EARTH'S REED RICHARDS GO VIRTUALLY UNOPPOSED.

THIS WAS AIDED PRIMARILY BY THE ABSENCE OF TONY STARK AND THE DISCOVERY AND RECOVERY OF CAPTAIN AMERICA AFTER THE INITIATIVE PROGRAM WAS ALREADY IN PLACE.

MILLIONS OF REALITIES SIMILAR TO OUR OWN, AND ONLY 418 WHERE A CONFLICT THAT TORE THE SUPER HERO COMMUNITY APART WAS AVOIDED.

I DISCOVERED ONE CONSTANT THROUGH ALL 418 MODELS...

VODKA

I ACTED ALONE.

NO ASSISTANCE FROM HANK PYM OR TONY STARK. NO INTERPRETATION OF MY 100 IDEAS, NO INTERFERENCE BECAUSE OF ADDITIONAL OPINIONS...

NO COMPROMISING WITH INFERIOR IDEAS.

CAN IT BE THAT SIMPLE?

I HAVE TO FIND OUT MORE.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

COMPRESSING...

COMPRESSING...

STARBOARD MEN N' STEADY YOURSELVES!

PREPARE T' BE BOARDED AND LET T' SEAS TURN RED WITH COLONIAL BLOOD!

THIS DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT AT ALL. NOT ONE BIT.

CAN SOMEONE PLEASE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE BRIDGE

CHAPTER THREE

HERE THEY COME. DEVILS FROM ANOTHER LAND.

AND ON ORDER O' T' HIGH COUNCIL I HAVE BEEN TASKED T' HARRASS THESE MONSTERS T' MAKE SURE THEY NEVER REACH OUR SHORES.

I BE A PRIVATEER FOR T' CAUSE AND I WILL DO ME DUTY.

WENCH, THIS'LL BE THIRSTY WORK-- SO HAVE A DRINK WAITIN' FOR ME WHEN I BE DONE!

AYE, CAP'N!

SLASH SLASH SLASH SLASH

IT'S A QUANDARY TO BE SURE. FIRST I WAS IN ONE PLACE AND NOW I FIND MYSELF IN ANOTHER.

THERE, AND NOW, HERE.

THERE A RESPECTABLE MEMBER OF THE QUEEN'S COUNCIL, *HERE* SURROUNDED BY FREELOADING RUFFIANS WHO, UNLESS I AM MISTAKEN, ARE MOST CERTAINLY ENGAGED IN CRIMINAL ENDEAVORS MOST UNBECOMING OF A MAN OF MY STATURE...

WHAT IS ONE TO DO?

SHADDUP AND HIT SOMETHIN'!

OH, VERY WELL.

AGENT STORM TO HIGH COUNCIL. AGENT STORM TO HIGH COUNCIL...ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS?

YES -- REPORT, AGENT STORM.

IT GOES WELL, SIRS...

WE HAVE HARASSED THE ENEMY ALL ALONG THEIR BORDER. AT TIMES RESPONSE HAS BEEN HEAVY, BUT WE STAND FIRM.

I PROMISE, WHEN WE'RE DONE WITH THEM, THEY'LL NEVER THREATEN OUR LANDS AGAIN.

WELL DONE, CONTINUE THE GOOD WORK.

AND AGENT STORM, IF I MAY SAY...YOUR DISGUISE IS VERY BECOMING.

YOU LOOK QUITE FETCHING.

THANK YOU SIR, I'M LUCKY THE SCURVY ONLY TOOK ONE OF MY TEETH!

THE BRIDGE.

SIXTY-SEVEN EARTHS.

I LEARNED THAT ONLY SIXTY-SEVEN EARTHS THAT HAD SUFFERED THROUGH BOTH A SUPER HERO CIVIL WAR AND THE CREATION OF THE ILLUMINATI WOULD KNOW PEACE.

THE TRUTH OF THE "WHY" WAS EVEN MORE DISTURBING THAN THE EVIDENCE.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-976.

THIS WORLD'S REED CONVINCED TONY STARK THAT IF THEY HAD THE LARGER INTEREST OF THE PLANET IN MIND, THEY SHOULD INCLUDE MEMBERS WHO COULD PROTECT IT BEST.

A SOLIDIFIED FRONT, A COMMON CAUSE TO UNIFY THE MOST AMBITIOUS OF US INTO SOMETHING GREATER.

A PRIMARY CATALYST THAT AFFECTED EVERYONE.

AGENT STORM, SIGNING OFF--

WOMAN!

I BE PARCHED!

COMIN', CAP'N!

CASE STUDY: EARTH-5521.

THE FIRST ACT OF THIS ILLUMINATI WAS TO UNLEASH THE PHOENIX ON THE SKRULL HOMEWORLD.

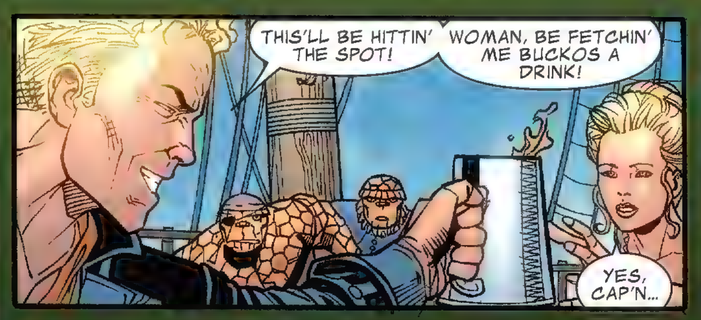
SOON AFTER, THE REED OF THIS EARTH WAS FORCED TO DESTROY HER TO AVOID HER FURTHER DESCENT INTO MADNESS AND AN EVEN GREATER ALIEN INVASION BY THE SHI'AR.

THAT ILLUMINATI NEVER MET AGAIN, BUT THE RESULT WAS THE AVOIDANCE OF ANY FURTHER ALIEN HOSTILITIES.

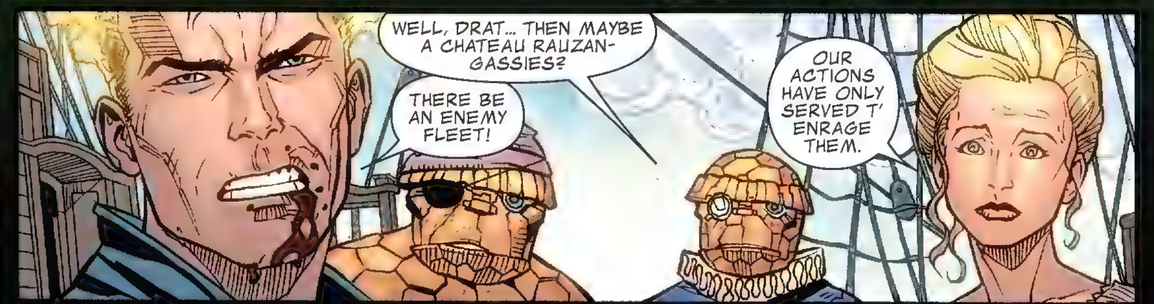
IT WAS BECOMING DIFFICULT TO JUDGE THESE AS SUCCESSES.

SIGHHH
!OH !NO!
NEXT DAN
DOWN!

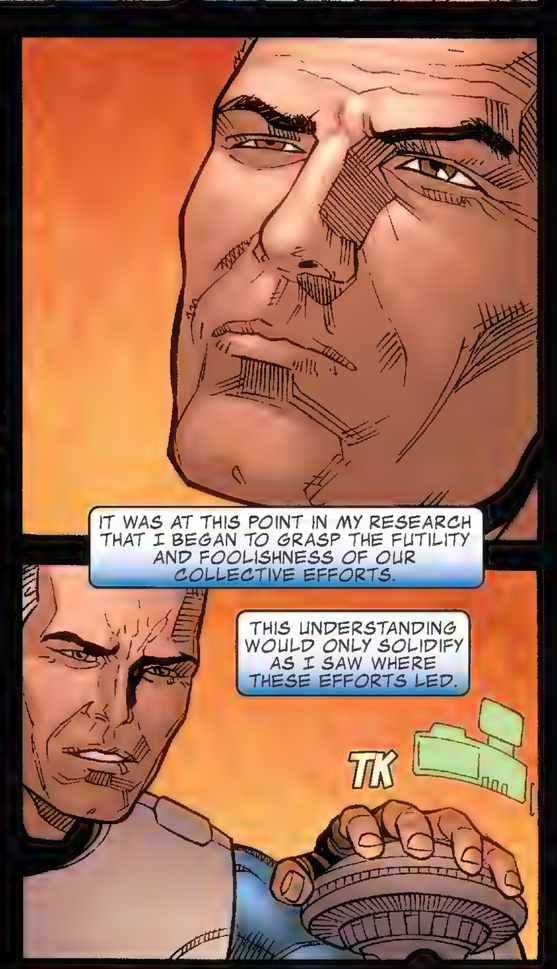
AHOY! THOUGHT YOU COULD SNEAK UP ON ME?
NOW WENCH, GROG ME!


THIS'LL BE HITTIN' THE SPOT!
WOMAN, BE FETCHIN' ME BUCKOS A DRINK!
YES, CAP'N...

EXCUSE ME. A MOMENT...
I'D MUCH RATHER HAVE WINE IF YOU HAVE IT, SOMETHING SWEET PERHAPS?
NO!


WELL, DRAT... THEN MAYBE A CHATEAU RAUZAN-GASSIES?
THERE BE AN ENEMY FLEET!
OUR ACTIONS HAVE ONLY SERVED T' ENRAGE THEM.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-231.
THIS WORLD'S REED RICHARDS AVOIDED ALL FUTURE CALAMITY CAUSED BY THE ILLUMINATI BY ELIMINATING THEM AT THE POINT OF INCEPTION.
THIS REED KNEW THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD THE BROTHERHOOD FAIL TO BE FORMED.
THIS REED KNEW THAT THEIR AMBITION WOULD EXCEED THEIR ABILITIES AND THAT CHAOS WOULD FOLLOW.
THIS REED FELT HE HAD NO OTHER CHOICE.


IT WAS AT THIS POINT IN MY RESEARCH THAT I BEGAN TO GRASP THE FUTILITY AND FOOLISHNESS OF OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS.
THIS UNDERSTANDING WOULD ONLY SOLIDIFY AS I SAW WHERE THESE EFFORTS LED.
TK

THE BAXTER BUILDING.

YOU SURE IT'S ALRIGHT TO BE RUNNING THIS IN HERE?

WELL, THIS IS AS HIGH AS WE CAN GO IN THE BUILDING, EVERYTHING ELSE IS CUT OFF BY THE ENERGY FIELD -- SO THERE'S NO WAY WE CAN GET TO OUR FLOOR AND OUR KITCHEN.

BE HAPPY WE FOUND THE HOT DOGS.

AND THE BEANS.

BEANS AND FRANKLINS.

FRANKLINS AND BEANS.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO IF MOM AND DAD AREN'T OUT OF THIS THING BY TOMORROW?

TOMORROW?

REMEMBER THAT PAPER THOSE H.A.M.M.E.R. GUYS GAVE US?

IT SAYS THAT NORMAN OSBORN IS COMING HERE TOMORROW TO SEE MOM AND DAD AND DECIDE IF THEY GET TO KEEP BEIN' SUPER HEROES.

NOT GONNA HAPPEN.

WELL, SURE, IF MOM AND DAD SHOW UP, BUT IF THEY DON'T, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

THEY SHOW UP OR THEY DON'T, EITHER WAY I AIN'T GONNA LET IT HAPPEN.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

FEED SEED

BANK

I SAY, THIS ESTABLISHMENT SEEMS TO BE SOMEWHAT SEDATE.

AYE! GROG BE TASTY, BUT THAR BE NO WENCHES ABOUT.

I'D WATCH YOUR TONGUE, FRIEND.

YOU'RE NEW AROUND THESE PARTS, SO IT'S T'BE EXPECTED, BUT WE DON'T TALK ABOUT THE WOMENFOLK 'ROUND HERE IN THAT MANNER.

WHY SO, LANDLUBBER?

YOU'RE FIXIN' TO SEE.

THE REASON WHY THE STREETS IS EMPTY, THE REASON WHY NOBODY'S DRINKING... THERE'S GETTIN' READY T'BE A RECKONIN'.

"BLACK SUSAN'S ABOUT TO DEAL DEATH TO ANOTHER MAN THINKIN' HE COULD CHANGE THE WAYS OF THIS TOWN.

"SHE'S THE REASON THERE AIN'T NO WHORIN' NOR GAMBLIN' IN TOWN.

"SHE MAKES THE RULES 'ROUND HERE, AND AIN'T NO ONE YET HAD THE GUN TO CHANGE THAT.

"BUT THE MAN IN WHITE MEANS TO.

"HE RODE INTO TOWN ONE DAY. NO ONE KNOWIN' WHERE HE CAME FROM OR WHAT HE DID BEFORE--HE JUST APPEARED FROM OUT THERE... SOMEWHERE ***BEYOND.***

"HE WAS FULL OF IDEAS. THINGS THAT HE THOUGHT NEEDED CHANGIN'.

"SHE DISAGREED, SO NOW THEY'RE AT'A IMPASSE.

"AND WHEN THAT CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE THEY'RE GONNA FIND OUT WHO'S GONNA GET THEIR WAY.

"AIN'T WE?"

THE BRIDGE.

BY THE TIME MY PARAMETERS HAD EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF THE ILLUMINATI, THINGS HAD GROWN PROGRESSIVELY WORSE.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-538

AFTER BEING CONFRONTED, THE BEYONDER CHOSE TO REMAKE THE WORLD INTO A PLACE WHERE HE IS WORSHIPPED AND ADORED.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-29007

THIS EARTH KNEW PEACE, AS ALL HEROES AND VILLAINS WERE TRANSPORTED TO A RE-IMAGINED BATTLEWORLD. THAT WAR WAS NOT SO SECRET.

CASE STUDY: EARTH-2819

WHEN CONFRONTED BY THIS REALITY'S ILLUMINATI, THIS BEYONDER CHOSE TO INCINERATE THE WORLD IN A FIT OF RAGE, ONLY TO REMAKE IT, STARTING WITH A SINGLE MAN AND WOMAN.

THIS WAS THE DEATH AND REBIRTH OF MAN.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

CLICK! 11 12 1

CLICK! 12 1

CLICK!

CLICK!

CLICK! GONG! 1K

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!
STORE
TK

EXPANDING THE SEARCH TO INCLUDE EVERYTHING UP TO THE SKRULL INVASION. ONLY ONE SINGLE WORLD OUT OF ALL REALITIES KNEW A PEACEFUL SOLUTION.

ONE EARTH WHERE THE CURVE OF POSSIBILITY FLATTENED AGAINST THE AXIS OF AVAILABLE TIME...

CASE STUDY: EARTH-3290.

TOTAL SURRENDER.

HE LOVES YOU.

THE MEANING WAS CLEAR--THE ILLUMINATI AS A CATALYST FOR PEACEFUL CHANGE YIELDS AN ALMOST ZERO PROBABILITY FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

AND AS THE ACTIONS OF OUR GROUP LED DIRECTLY TO THE SKRULL INVASION, OUR WAR WAS, IN MANY WAYS, AN UNAVOIDABLE BY-PRODUCT OF OUR COLLECTIVE AMBITION.

SOMEWHERE IN THERE WAS THE ANSWER...

WHERE INTENT MET ACTUALITY. WHERE IDEAS COLLIDED WITH THE REAL WORLD.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

AHOY! THIS BE SOME KIND OF VESSEL. YOU MAKE A FORMIDABLE CAP'N, MATEY!

AH, YES, THEN THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING OF A PROBLEM.

AYE?

I LACK THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THIS FLYING MACHINE.

WHHHOOOOOAA!

THE ENEMY HAS BEEN OVERLY AGGRESSIVE. THE ENEMY HAS BITTEN OFF MORE THAN HE CAN CHEW. THE ENEMY IS GETTIN' READY TO MEET HIS WORST NIGHTMARE.

A UNITED STATES SOLDIER COMMITTED TO VICTORY WITH A VIRTUOUS HEART AND A LOADED RIFLE.

NOW GET OUT THERE AND REPEL THESE INVADERS.

UNFORTUNATE NEWS, SIR.

WELL, WHAT IS IT, SON? SPIT IT OUT.

SHIP BE GOIN' DOWN, CAP'N. WE LOST HER.

ONE CHUTE LEFT, BOYS.

CALAMITOUS TURN OF EVENTS, I MUST SAY.

OH WELL...

8:00

BUUUZZZZZZZ!

MORNIN'.

MURMBLE.

LET'S SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.

PLOOP!

OH, NO... WAKE UP, VAL!

WAKE UP!

NORMAN OSBORN IS A'COMIN'

AND HELL'S COMIN' WITH 'IM!

theBLVD

HAMMER

THE BAXTER BUILDING.

MOM AND DAD STILL AREN'T BACK.

WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO HANDLE THIS OURSELVES.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, VAL... I'VE GOT AN IDEA.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, FRANKLIN?

TOTALLY MESS WITH HIS HEAD.

BZZZZ!

WE DIDN'T ORDER ANY PIZZA.

AHEM. YES...

NORMAN OSBORN HERE TO SEE REED RICHARDS.

I'M EXPECTED.

UUUGGH..

FANTASTIC FOUR
THE BRIDGE
CHAPTER FOUR

ARRRRHHH!

ENOUGH!

EXPANDED PARAMETERS ONLY RESULT IN EQUALLY UNACCEPTABLE OUTCOMES.

OVER ONE BILLION EARTHS DOWNLOADED INTO MY BRAIN AND MY CONCLUSION REMAINS THE SAME.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES COULD WHAT HAS COME TO PASS BEEN AVOIDED.

AND SO I HAVE ARRIVED.

SUPER.

TAKE US TO YOUR FATHER, YOUNG LADY.

UH...NO. I CAN'T DO THAT

EXCUSE ME?

WELL, I CAN TAKE ONE OF YOU, BUT NOT BOTH.

LITTLE GIRL, I'M NOT SURE I APPRECIATE YOUR TONE.

HHRRRR...

SO SORRY, BUT IT SAYS RIGHT HERE IN THE PAPERS WE WERE SERVED:

BLAH, BLAH, BLAH... MEETING WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF NORMAN OSBORN ON...BLAH!

A. SINGULAR. ONE.

YOU WROTE THE RULES, MISTER, DONTCHA THINK YOU OUGHT TO PLAY BY THEM?

RRAAAHHHHH!

SO GROSS.

NO, NO. GARGAN... THE LITTLE LADY'S GOT A POINT.

WAIT HERE. I'LL HANDLE THIS.

LATER I'LL LET YOU EAT THE LAWYER THAT PREPARED THAT DOCUMENT.

HRRRRR.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO SPEAK WITH YOUR FATHER ABOUT THROWING HIS CHILDREN TO THE WOLVES.

UH-HUH.

MAYBE I'M BEING PRESUMPTUOUS, BUT IT'S RECKLESS AND DISAPPOINTING.

YES. YES, INDEED...I WILL HAVE TO MENTION IT.

OH, YOU WON'T BE MEETING WITH DAD.

WHAT?

MOM AND DAD ARE BOTH BUSY DOING SUPER HERO STUFF. SAVING THE WORLD --THINGS LIKE THAT.

THEY'RE WAY TOO BUSY TO MEET WITH SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

THEN WHO--?

HIM.

NICE HAIR, LOSER.

COLLAPSED SPACE-TIME.

ATTENTION!

ATTENTION!

SANCTUARY HAS BEEN BROKEN!

LOYAL COMPANIONS AND WEIRD TIME TRAVELERS FROM OTHER LANDS--

OUR GALAXY HAS BEEN OVERRUN BY EVIL--A DARKNESS HAS FALLEN OVER US.

PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR WHAT FOLLOWS.

GUIDE US, SUPREME INTELLIGENCE--LET US KNOW WHAT WE SHOULD DO AND WE WILL DO THAT VERY THING.

TELL US YOUR PLAN.

THERE IS NO PLAN.

WE'RE TOTALLY SCREWED.

WHAT?

ERROR. ERROR. ERROR.

ALL SOCIETIES FALL.

WE FAILED TO DEAL WITH THIS THREAT ADEQUATELY.

WE COMPROMISED OUR BELIEFS AND ACCEPTED CORRUPT LEADERSHIP.

WE TOLERATED INNER DECAY.

WE CHOSE PEACE INSTEAD OF A CONSCIENTIOUS SOCIETY.

A BLACK HEART GREW WITHIN THE BODY OF OUR STATE AND WE TRIED UNDERSTANDING IT INSTEAD OF ERADICATING IT.

NOW IT IS TOO LATE.

THIS CANCER WILL KILL US ALL.

FEAR! IN THAT MAN LIES THE HEART OF A COWARD.

UNTIL MY DYING BREATH, I WILL FIGHT!

WHO'S WITH ME?

TOOTS, I AIN'T BACKIN' DOWN FROM NOBODY.

AYE!

PERSEVERANCE IS IRRELEVANT...WE ARE BEYOND REDEMPTION AND CANNOT HIDE FROM OUR FAILURES.

SELF-DESTRUCTING BASE IN FIVE, FOUR, THREE--

AAARRRR!

HERE THEY COME!

HE WAS RIGHT...THIS IS THE END.

NO.

IT'S NEVER OVER.

THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY.

IT'S A MOMENT, REALLY.

ONE SINGLE MOMENT.

A SINGLE INSTANCE OF LOOKING AT THINGS WITH BOTH THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE AND COMPLETE AND UTTER HONESTY.

ALL COLLECTIVE EFFORTS WERE FAILURES.

THE MASS OF SUCCESSES WERE REPRESENTED BY MY ACTING ALONE.

IS THIS TOTAL ARROGANCE?

OR IS IT HONESTY MEETING RESPONSIBILITY?

WHICH OF THESE IS FACT?

THE TRUTH.

PROJECTED AGAINST THE CANVAS OF ALL SPACE AND TIME, THERE IS ONE PERSON WHO COULD HAVE AVOIDED ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED.

ONLY ONE PERSON SMART ENOUGH TO SOLVE ALL THE PROBLEMS AND ANSWER ALL THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS.

FOR TOO LONG I HAVE HIDDEN BEHIND FALSE HUMILITY AND AS A RESULT RAN FROM THE THINGS I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO.

I AM THE MOST BRILLIANT MAN IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE--MY MIND IS A GIFT--AND WHEN PROBLEMS PRESENT THEMSELVES, IT FALLS TO ME--I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY--TO SOLVE THEM.

I HAVE FAILED EVERYONE...

...AND NOW THE TIME HAS COME TO FIX IT.

COMPUTER, BEGIN POWERING DOWN THE BRIDGE.

SWITCHING OFF THE VISUALIZER.

CLICK!

OHHH...

WE'RE BACK.

HERE YOU GO, SIS.

WE HAVE TO...

YEAH, LET'S GO.

DING.

HEY THERE.

REED!

GOOD TO SEE YA, STRETCH.

TOOK YA LONG ENOUGH!

WHERE ARE THE KIDS?

WHOA!

MESS WITH HIS HEAD?

MESS WITH HIS HEAD?!

OKAY, YEAH... SORRY.

PWING!

IN HERE, FRANKLIN!

TAKE COVER!!!

SHHH!

YOU CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW THAT I'M A FIRM BELIEVER IN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

AND DISRESPECTING YOUR ELDERS IS ONE OF MY BIGGEST NO-NO'S.

THIS IS GOING TO HURT YOU MUCH MORE THAN IT'S GOING TO HURT ME.

FRANKLIN...

JUST STAY BEHIND ME, VAL...

I'LL PROTECT YOU.

NORMAN OSBORN...

WHAT?

GET AWAY FROM MY CHILDREN!

THE BAXTER BUILDING:

I SAID... GET AWAY FROM THE CHILDREN, OSBORN.

MAKE ME.

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE BRIDGE

CHAPTER FIVE

WITH PLEASURE.

WHOOF!

YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET THAT.

THINK OF THIS AS A DOG WHISTLE...

"HERE COMES THE WILD HUNT."

SUE, CLOSE OFF THE ROOM.

DONE.

OOOF!

HHHRRRR- UUGGH!

THHUMP!

WELL?

ME TRAPPED IN HERE WITH YOU. I'LL ADMIT, YOU HAVE ME AT SOMETHING OF A DISADVANTAGE...

YOU MEN WAIT OUTSIDE.

DR. RICHARDS WON'T BE RELEASING ME UNLESS IT'S SAFE FOR HIM TO DO SO.

RIGHT?

OH, WE'RE GOING TO AGREE TO MORE THAN THAT.

I WANT YOU TO STAY OUT OF MY HOME.

FOR GOOD.

FINE, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I SAY NOW, YOU WON'T ACTUALLY BELIEVE ME--NOR SHOULD YOU... WE BOTH KNOW THE TRUTH.

THIS ISN'T CLOSE TO BEING FINISHED.

NO. NO IT ISN'T.

BUT YOU'RE LEAVING.

YES.

BUT IT MUST STING, KNOWING THE REALITY OF YOUR SITUATION.

KNOWING THAT, IN THE END, I'LL WIN.

I'M THE GOVERNMENT NOW, RICHARDS...

REED!

AND THAT MAKES ME THE FINAL AUTHORITY.

WHA--

BLAM

WHAT?

OH NO.

MISTER, I'M THE LAW 'ROUND THESE PARTS.

FRANKLIN, I DON'T CARE IF YOU THOUGHT IT WAS RIGHT OR NOT. YOU DON'T HURT OTHER PEOPLE.

OKAY, MOM... SORRY.

HERE YOU GO, KID...

I'LL TAKE THAT.

I'M NOT SURE THAT SORRY IS GOING TO CUT IT FOR EITHER OF YOU...

UHH.

SHOT ME... YOUR SON *SHOT ME*, RICHARDS.

I'M GOING TO--

YOU WON'T DO ANYTHING.

I WON'T LET YOU.

YOU WON'T LET? *YOU WON'T LET?*

I'LL COME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

I'LL COME AND YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO *STOP* ME!

I WILL.

NOW LEAVE. THIS IS THE LAST CHANCE YOU GET TO DO IT UNDER YOUR OWN POWER.

...LET'S SEE WHAT YOUR FATHER HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT.

I DON'T GET IT. IT'S JUST A TOY GUN.

ARE YOU OKAY?
YES.
UH-HUH.
WELL, LET'S HEAR IT.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN FRANKLIN, DAD.
NO, YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN VAL. SHE TOTALLY SCARED OFF THOSE H.A.M.M.E.R. GUYS.
SHE DID IT WITH A PHONE.
AND FRANKLIN TOTALLY FACED DOWN THAT GUY WITH THE BAD HAIR.
I WAS SPIDER-MAN.
HE FREAKED HIM OUT. IT WAS GREAT.
AND WE STAYED UP ALL NIGHT.
I STAYED UP ALL NIGHT, FRANKLIN FELL ASLEEP.
DID NOT.
WELL, I'M GLAD YOU'RE BOTH OKAY, BUT LATER WE'RE GOING TO TALK MORE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED...
ESPECIALLY YOU AND I, FRANKLIN.
OK, DAD.
SO, REED, DID YOU FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEEDED TO?
IT'S HARD TO SAY RIGHT NOW, BUT, YES, I THINK I DID.
WELL, STRETCH, I'M GLAD, BUT I GOTTA TELL YA, WE BEEN THROUGH THE WRINGER.

YES, WE HAVE.

DO YOU WANT TO TELL US WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOU?

IT WORKED.

I WAS ABLE TO SEE... EVERYTHING.

I THINK I MIGHT KNOW HOW TO FIX THINGS. FIX THEM FOR GOOD.

I DON'T CARE WHAT YOUR MOM AND DAD SAY... GREAT JOB, GUYS!

WHO WANTS TO SEE THEIR NEW ROOMS?

ARE YOU SURE EVERYTHING'S ALL RIGHT? DID SOMETHING ELSE HAPPEN?

WHAT?

"DID SOMETHING ELSE HAPPEN?"

COMPUTER, BEGIN POWERING DOWN THE BRIDGE.

SWITCHING OFF THE VISUALIZER.

WAIT.

WAIT.

WAIT.

COMPUTER, ONE FINAL PROJECTION BEFORE WE SHUT DOWN.

ELIMINATING ALL PREVIOUS PARAMETERS, HOW MANY OTHER INSTANCES HAVE THERE BEEN REQUIRING SIMILAR TECHNOLOGY TO YOUR OWN...

HOW MANY OTHER BRIDGES HAVE BEEN BUILT?

PROCESSING...

PROCESSING...

PROCESSING...

ONE HUNDRED-FORTY-ONE.

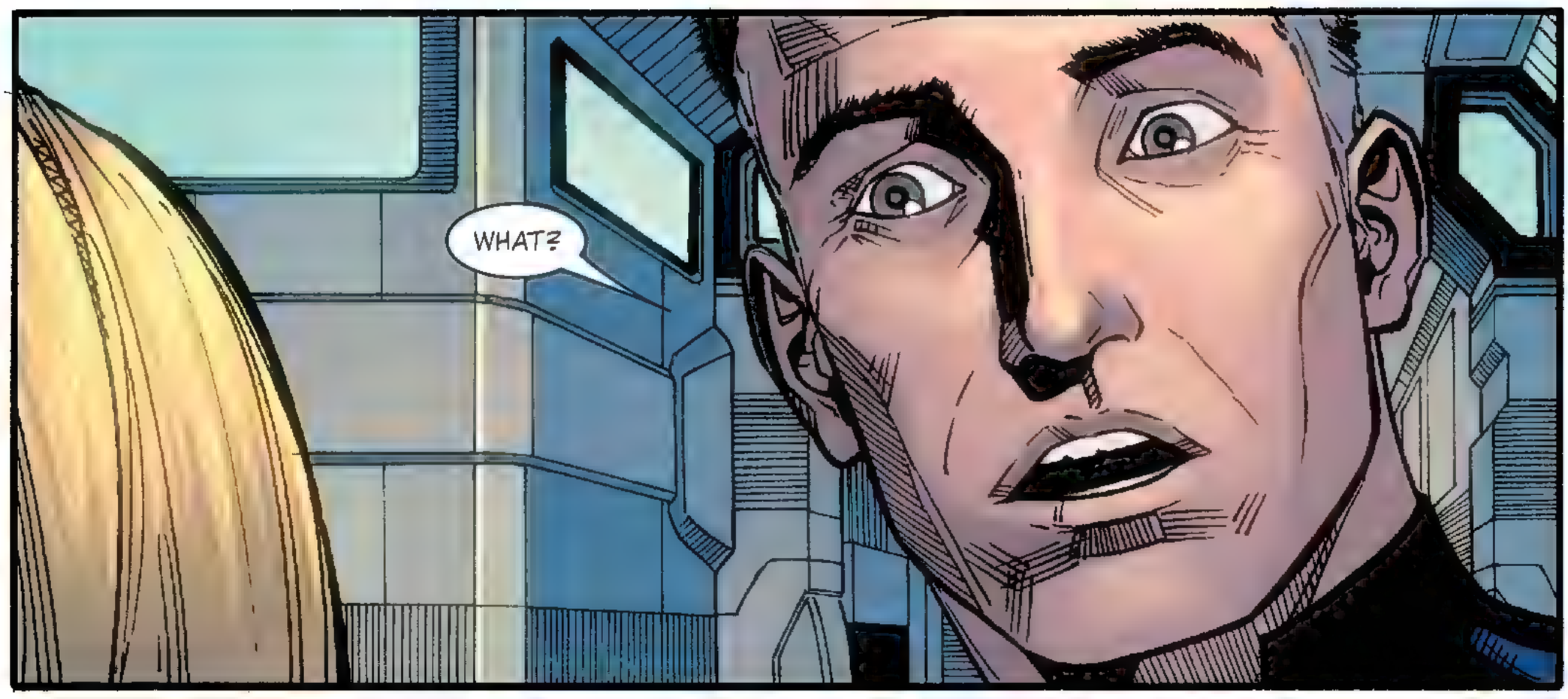
OH!

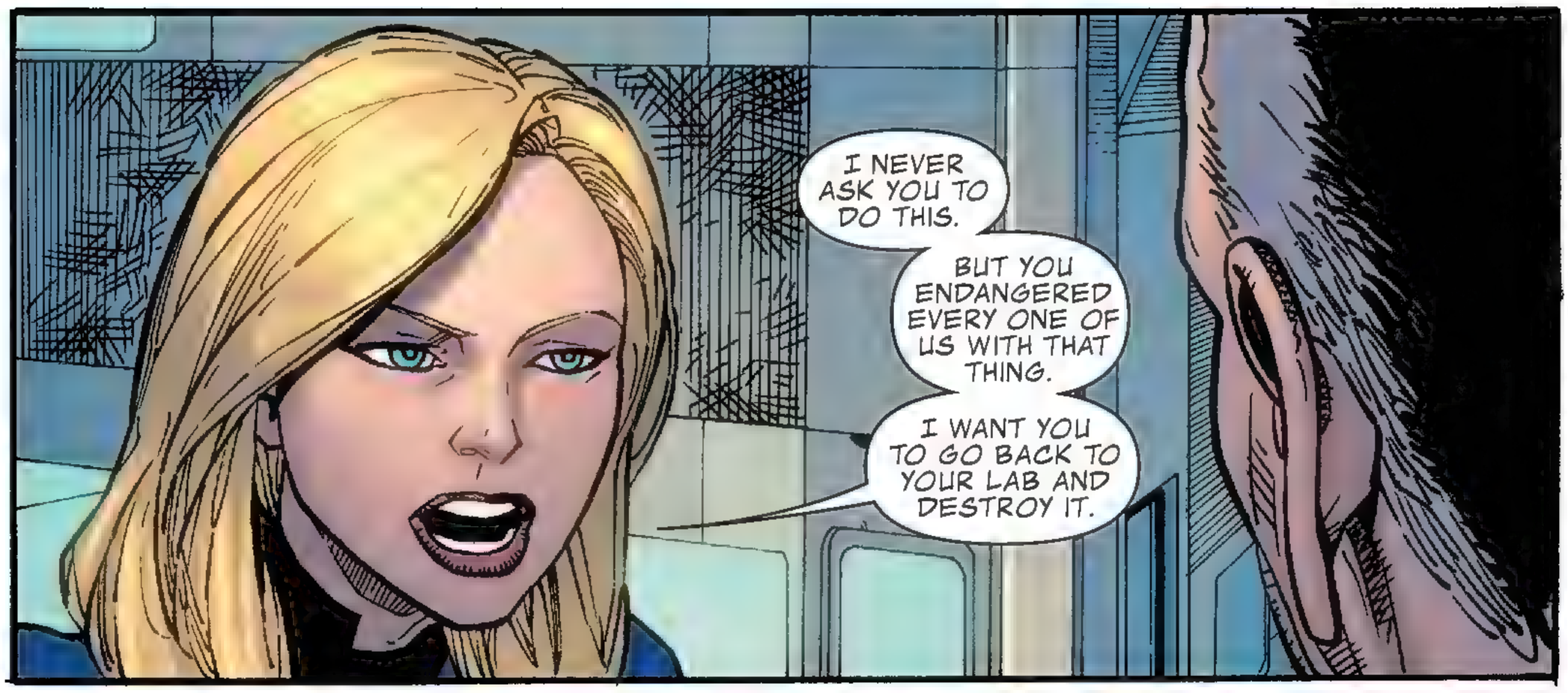
WELL, DID SOMETHING ELSE HAPPEN?

NO.

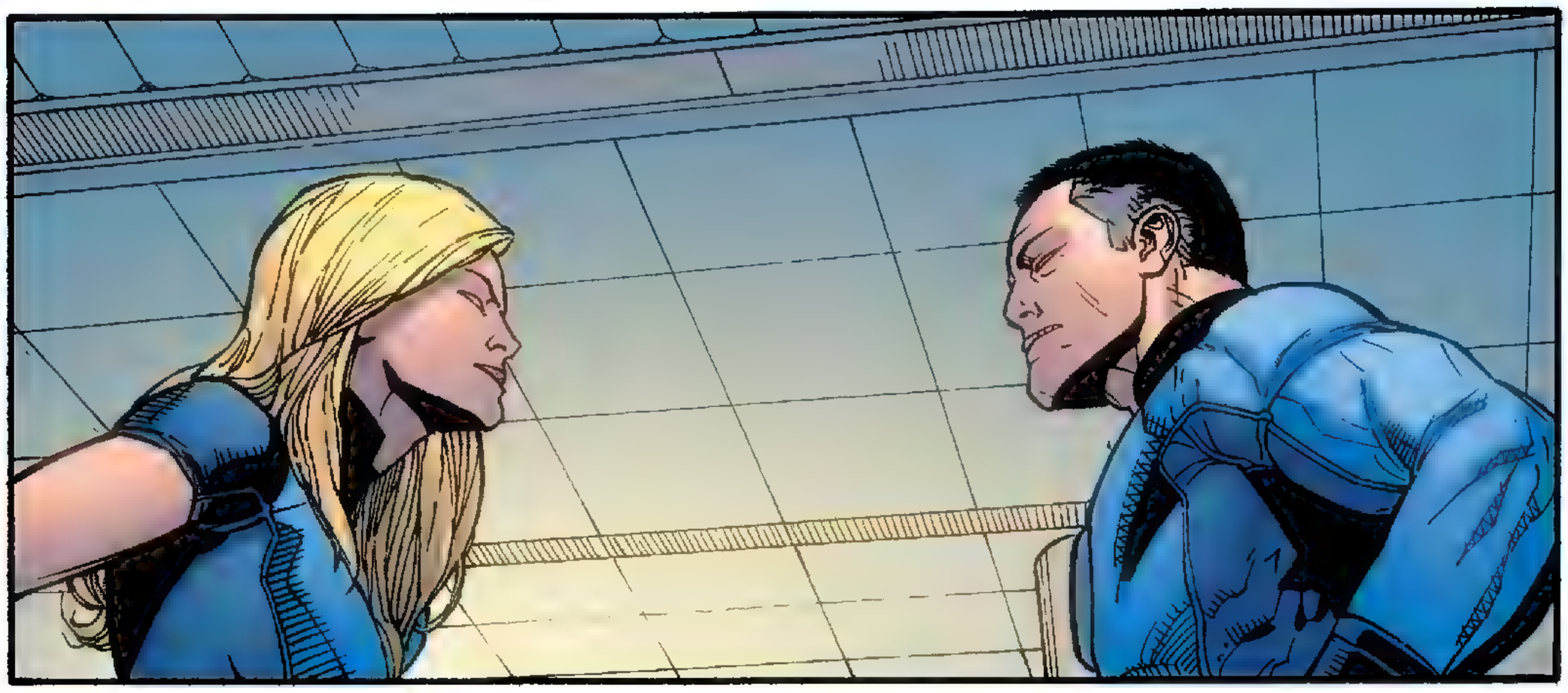
NOTHING.

THEN I WANT YOU TO DESTROY IT.


WHAT?


I NEVER ASK YOU TO DO THIS.
BUT YOU ENDANGERED EVERY ONE OF US WITH THAT THING.
I WANT YOU TO GO BACK TO YOUR LAB AND DESTROY IT.

SUE, I...
PROMISE ME.
I...
PROMISE ME.



"I'LL TAKE IT APART PIECE BY PIECE."

I PROMISE.

LET ME GUESS.

YOU WANT TO FIX THINGS.

WE CAN HELP WITH THAT.

WHO ARE YOU?

WE'RE JUST LIKE YOU, REED.

AND WE'LL BE HERE WAITING WHEN YOU'RE READY.

BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG...

THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MUCH WORSE THINGS COULD GET.

I TOLD HER I'D TAKE IT APART PIECE BY PIECE, SO I DID...

POWERING OFF.

KLIK!

AND THEN I PUT IT ALL BACK TOGETHER.

I HAD TO.

IT WAS TWO WEEKS AFTER THE SKRULL INVASION...

IT'S WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DAYS AFTER NORMAN OSBORN TOOK CONTROL -- WHEN MY FAMILY RETURNED TO THEIR HOME.

IT WAS THE DAY I COMMITTED MYSELF...

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD.

A MOMENT OF CLARITY DEFINING WHO I NEEDED TO BE AND WHAT IT WOULD COST TO ACHIEVE IT.

A MOMENT OF TRUTH.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF A SINGLE FACT.

I HAD CAUSED ALL OF THIS.

AND ALL OF HUMANITY, MY FAMILY...MY CHILDREN, THEY SUFFER FOR IT.

THIS WAS THE WORLD THAT I HAD CREATED.

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO FIX IT...TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT.

IDEA #101
SOLVE
EVERYTHING

THERE'S NO PROBLEM THAT CAN'T BE SOLVED.

END DR:FF

SEVERAL WEEKS AGO.
THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST MEETING OF NORMAN OSBORN'S CABAL.

ARE WE ALONE?
WE ARE.
WHAT'S THE MOVE HERE?

IT IS AS BEFORE. LET HIM SET US UP. HE WILL SOON IMPLODE. THEN WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER...

YOU'LL GET THE SEAS, I'LL GET THE LAND.

AND IF HE DOESN'T?
IT'S HIS NATURE. HE WILL.

BUT IF HE DOESN'T?

ONE YEAR LATER...

HAVE THINGS NOT GONE EXACTLY AS I PLANNED?

POWER. WEALTH. ***REVENGE.*** HAVE I NOT GIVEN YOU EVERYTHING I SAID I WOULD?

PERHAPS IF I HAD FALLEN SHORT ON MY PROMISES, ***PERHAPS THEN*** I WOULD NOT BE AGGRIEVED THAT YOU TWO ARE THE ONLY ONES WILLING TO SHOW UP WHEN I CALL A MEETING.

WE LACK A DEMON, A GODDESS AND A WITCH...

I'LL DEAL WITH THEM LATER.

PERHAPS THEY'VE GROWN TIRED OF CERTAIN COMPANY, OSBORN.

A SENTIMENT I *SHARE*, VICTOR.

AND IN THAT SPIRIT I'VE DECIDED TO MAKE SOME *CHANGES* TO OUR SPECIAL LITTLE CLUB...

...A SMALL SHIFT IN THE POWER STRUCTURE.

HEY, WHEN DID DOOM START WEARING RED?

THIS?

IT WAS A *GIFT*...

"...FROM THE HOOD."

AS WAS THIS.

WE'RE DOING THIS NOW?

I WILL WAIT NO LONGER.

UNGRATEFUL...

DEAL WITH THIS.

WHAT?

THEY ARE GONE.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE UNIVERSE.

ALL THE HEAVENS IN BETWEEN US, AND NOW, SO MUCH LESS BETWEEN YOU AND I.

ONE OF THESE DAYS I'M GOING TO LEARN THAT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS GOOD HELP.

AND BESIDES, I DO LOVE GETTING MY OWN HANDS DIRTY.

UGGHFFF!

NAMOR... NAMOR, I GAVE YOU BACK YOUR KINGDOM.

YES.

YES, YOU DID, NORMAN... I THANK YOU FOR THAT.

BUT MY ALLEGIANCE LIES WITH DOOM.

CHUUUNKK!

YOU'RE WEARING THE DEMON'S CLOAK, SO I ASSUME YOU HANDLED THE HOOD...

YES.

AND WHAT OF THE WOMEN?

THEY ARE WHERE THEY *BELONG.*

"DOOM."

HMMM?

YOU'RE IGNORING ME, DOCTOR?

MY APOLOGIES, NAMOR. OUR MEETING...

MY THOUGHTS WANDER.

I'M SURE.

YOU AND YOUR GREAT DREAMS...

SOMETIMES, VICTOR, I WONDER WHATEVER GOES ON IN THAT MIND OF YOURS.

DOOM.

ALWAYS DOOM.

...AND I'LL GET THE LAND

ONCE I BUILT A GREAT MACHINE

FANTASTIC FOUR

VOL ONE SOLVE EVERYTHING

IS IT PLAYING

GOD

IF YOU'RE TRULY SERIOUS ABOUT

CREATION

THEN.

UMMM...

IT'S ALL RIGHT.

I'LL CATCH YOU.

UMMM...

I DON'T THINK...

I'M RIGHT HERE.

I DON'T THINK I WANT TO.

LET'S DO SOMETHING ELSE, OKAY?

LOOK AT ME, SON.

IT'S OKAY TO BE AFRAID.

IT'S OKAY TO FAIL.

BUT TO SAY THAT YOU'RE NOT EVEN WILLING TO TRY...

...THAT'S UNACCEPTABLE, REED.

OKAY... I'LL...DO MY BEST.

ARE YOU READY?

I'M READY.

GOOD.

NOW JUMP.

NOW.

KRAK!

I AM AN INSTRUMENT OF FATE.

I HAVE BEEN CREATED FOR A SINGLE PURPOSE.

I AM RIGHTEOUS VENGEANCE IN ROBOTIC FORM.

ON IT, DEAR.

LOOK OUT, SUE!

OOFF!

REED!

WE'RE IN TROUBLE HERE. JOHNNY'S OUT AND I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN TO HOLD THINGS TOGETHER.

MAYBE NOW'S THE TIME FOR SOME DEDUCTIVE REASONING?

URPPH!

IT'S ACTUALLY FASCINATING.

EACH OF THESE MACHINES APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN--URPPH--MANUFACTURED SPECIFICALLY TO DEFEAT A SINGLE MEMBER OF OUR SUPER HERO FAMILY.

I CANNOT FAIL.

SMASH!

THEN WE BETTER SWITCH THINGS UP!

HRRMM.

THERE WAS A HOLE IN MY LOGIC.

HEY, THERE'S A GUY *INSIDE.*

HE AIN'T GOT NO CLOTHES ON.

IT'S BENTLEY WITTMAN-- *THE WIZARD,* BEN. I'D RECOGNIZE THAT HEAD ANYWHERE.

JOHNNY!

CHECK THE OTHER MACHINES!

WILL DO.

YEP. ALL THREE-- ALIVE AND KICKIN'

WELL THEN...

BE CAREFUL, THERE ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED.

CHOOM

LET'S SHOW A LITTLE COMPASSION AND RESTRAINT FOR OUR FELLOW MAN.

URRMPH!

MANHATTAN.
THE WIZARD'S LAIR.
AN UNHOLY TEMPLE OF SCIENCE.

IS THERE ANYTHING MORE DISAPPOINTING TO A CREATOR THAN THE *FAILURE* OF HIS *CREATION*?

WHY IS IT THAT MY SONS SO THOROUGHLY FAIL TO PLEASE ME?

IT IS ALL SO VERY *DISAPPOINTING*.

I KNOW THAT A FATHER IS SUPPOSED TO UNCONDITIONALLY LOVE HIS CHILDREN...

BUT I CAN ONLY FIND ROOM IN MY HEART FOR ANGER FOR YOU AND YOUR CURRENT GENERATION.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.

HERE'S DA LAST ONE.

REED, THEY'RE ALL THE SAME PERSON.

MANUFACTURED, I'D GUESS... CLONES.

WELL, WHICH ONE IS THE REAL DEAL?

NOT SURE.

MAYBE NONE OF THEM.

SOMETHING'S NOT QUITE RIGHT HERE.

LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK.

OH, THAT'S COMPLETELY MESSED UP.

DNA-BASED PROCESSING. REDUNDANT INTELLIGENCE CENTERS. TRANSUNIVERSAL POINT-TO-POINT DATA STREAMING...

REALLY SOLID WORK, DR. WITTMAN.

OH! HERE'S THE REAL PROBLEM.

HUNTER-KILLER CLONES DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO TERMINATE US AND YOU'VE FOUND A *BIGGER PROBLEM?*

HE'S GOT A PLUTONIUM-POWERED BRAIN, SUE.

HE'S HIS OWN *FINAL SOLUTION.*

GREAT. ANY OTHER BAD NEWS?

BOMB'S *ACTIVE.*

I CAN TRACK THE FEED. UNFORTUNATELY I ONLY PACKED A SINGLE TRANSLOCATOR. DON'T WORRY, THIS SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG.

I'LL BE HOME FOR *DINNER.*

REED!

PLOOP!

HUH?

OH...

PLOOP!

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

IS IT PLAYING GOD IF YOU'RE TRULY *SERIOUS* ABOUT CREATION?

NO, IT'S *NOT.*

YOU NEED TO STOP THIS.

DON'T BE AFRAID, RICHARDS--THIS IS *DISCOVERY.*

WHAT DO YOU SAY...

LET'S SLICE OPEN SOME ATOMS AND GET A PEEK AT THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE.

BENTLEY... YOU'RE NOT WELL.

YOU THINK I DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS?

I *DO*. WE NEED TO BURN IT DOWN AND START OVER.

GODS MAKE MISTAKES, RICHARDS-- LOOK AT *US*.

MAYBE WE CAN PUBLISH A PAPER TOGETHER.

WHEN THEY LOCK YOU UP I'LL MAKE SURE YOU GET THE VERY BEST CARE...

I'LL VISIT REGULARLY. I *PROMISE*.

LATER. THE BAXTER BUILDING.

AND THAT... IS WHAT DADDY DID AT WORK TODAY.

YES! POW! TAKE THAT BAD GUYS!

HA!

TELL US ANOTHER STORY, DAD!

IT'S BEDTIME, FRANKLIN.

AND TONIGHT WAS AN EXCEPTION-- YOU KNOW THAT I DON'T LIKE STORY TIME TO BE ABOUT WHATEVER ADVENTURES YOUR MOTHER AND I GET INTO.

YOU HEAR ENOUGH ABOUT THAT FROM UNCLE JOHNNY AND BEN.

SO, TOMORROW NIGHT IT'S BACK TO READING FROM THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS. EXCITING STUFF.

AWWW, MAN.

GOOD NIGHT, VAL.

I HOPE THE PART ABOUT THE BOMBS DIDN'T SCARE YOU.

DAD, I KNOW THAT YOU REBUILT THE ENTIRE TOP OF THE BUILDING TO ACT AS AN INTERDIMENSIONAL PANIC ROOM.

I WASN'T AFRAID-- FRANKLIN AND I WERE FINE.

BESIDES, I'M THREE YEARS OLD-- IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ME NOT TO SPEND TIME THINKING ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT.

'NIGHT!

I REALLY HATE GOING TO BED.

I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.

WHEN I GROW UP I'M GOING TO STAY UP SUPER LATE. EVEN LATER THAN UNCLE JOHNNY.

THAT'S PRETTY BIG TALK.

I'M A PRETTY BIG BOY.

LOVE YOU, DAD.

ME TOO, SON.

GOOD NIGHT.

HEY, DAD.

YES?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE LITTLE BOY?

WHO?

WELL...

AS YOU KNOW, WHEN A BAD GUY GETS CAPTURED, THEY USUALLY GET SENT TO PRISON. THEN IT BECOMES THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHORITIES TO HELP OUT WITH A SITUATION LIKE THIS.

THEY'LL FIND HIM A NEW HOME.

SO HE'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT?

THE WIZARD'S KID--YOU KNOW, THE LITTLE BOY IN THE STORY YOU TOLD US.

I HOPE SO. SOMETIMES WHEN CHILDREN HAVE BAD PARENTS IT MAKES THINGS VERY DIFFICULT. SOMETIMES THEY NEED A LOT OF LOOKING AFTER.

THERE'S TOO MUCH OF THAT GOING ON RIGHT NOW.

OH...

BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HELP HIM...

YOU HAVE TO TRY, RIGHT?

THREE CHOICES.

IN EACH ENVELOPE IS AN ALL-EXPENSES-PAID VACATION. EACH ONE TO A LUXURIOUS, REMOTE AND SECLUDED LOCATION.

IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE, CONTESTANT NUMBER ONE--WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

I DUNNO ABOUT THIS.

WHAT'S TO KNOW?

YOU'RE UGLY, YOU'RE LONELY AND YOU'VE JUST HAD YOUR HEART BROKEN. TIME TO GET OUTTA TOWN, MAN.

PICK.

OKAY.

UHH, DAT ONE.

KIDS ARE IN BED.

THANKS.

VAL FIGURED OUT THE CHANGES I MADE TO THE BUILDING.

HOW DID...

YOU SHOULD PLAN ON GETTING USED TO IT, SUSAN.

SHE'S GOING TO BE MUCH SMARTER THAN I AM.

WINNER, WINNER. CHICKEN DINNER!

3 DAYS, 2 NIGHTS ON BEAUTIFUL NU-WORLD WITH SUPER HERO/ CELEBRITY JOHNNY STORM.

OH, AND *WHAT'S THIS*, PRIZE INCLUDES FRUIT BASKET AND A SELECTION OF SCENTED OILS AND OTHER FINE BATH PRODUCTS.

VERY NICE, BENNY. *WELL DONE.*

AWW. YOU'RE JUST GONNA DITCH ME FOR SOME GIRL WHEN WE GET THERE.

YOU CAN'T PROVE THAT--HASN'T HAPPENED *YET.*

WE'LL GO THIS WEEKEND. HAVE A BAG PACKED. IT'S GONNA BE A BLAST.

SHOULDA' PICKED A DIFFERENT ONE.

I'M NOT SURE HOW TO HANDLE THIS.

THE SAME WAY YOU HANDLE EVERYTHING ELSE--BETTER THAN I DO. YOU'RE A GREAT MOM.

THAT'S ALL SHE NEEDS.

HEY! THESE ALL SAY THE SAME THING!

YOU COULDN'T LOSE, BIG GUY!

WHO LOVES YOU LIKE UNCLE JOHNNY?

OKAY, I'M GOING UPSTAIRS.

TURNING IN?

YES. I'M EXHAUSTED.

I NEVER USED TO GET THIS TIRED...

YOU COMING?

YOU *PRETEND* THAT THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME, BUT I KNOW YOU SEE THE SAME THINGS I DO.

MATH IS THE LANGUAGE OF GOD, RICHARDS.

WE'VE BOTH DONE THE CALCULATIONS--THIS WORLD IS GOING TO TEAR ITSELF APART AND THERE'S NOTHING EITHER OF US CAN DO TO STOP IT.

WE'VE BEEN *JUDGED.*

I'VE GOT SOME THINGS RATTLING AROUND IN MY HEAD I NEED TO DEAL WITH.

I WOULD TELL YOU NOT TO STAY UP TOO LATE, BUT WE BOTH KNOW BETTER THAN THAT, *DON'T WE?*

JUST DON'T FALL ASLEEP IN THE LAB, OKAY?

UH-HUH.

:SIGH:

10:40

CONFIRM VOICE AUTHORIZATION.

THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE.

ONCE, I BUILT A GREAT MACHINE.

CHUNK!

DEEP IN THOUGHT KEEP OUT

IT SPANNED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE *KNOWN* AND THE *UNKNOWN*--IT PROVIDED ANSWERS TO IMPOSSIBLE QUESTIONS.

WHAT IS THE TRUE COST OF A MAN'S MISTAKES?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MY LIFE?

HOW CAN I SAVE MY WORLD IN THESE DARK TIMES?

AND THE ONE THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING: *WHO ELSE* SEEKS THE ANSWERS TO THESE SAME QUESTIONS?

THE MACHINE WAS *PURE KNOWLEDGE*--A MUCH TOO DANGEROUS THING.

SO I HID IT HERE, IN MY ROOM OF 100 IDEAS.

100 IDEAS I BELIEVED WOULD *CHANGE THE WORLD*...

...AND A GREATER ONE *BEYOND* THAT.

I WANT TO BUILD A DIFFERENT FUTURE THAN THE TOMORROW I SEE ON THE HORIZON.

WHAT KIND OF MAN AM I IF I DON'T DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN?

SO NOW I RETURN TO THE MACHINE.

CLICK!

YOU SAID YOU COULD HELP ME.

HE TOOK THREE DAYS LONGER THAN NORMAL.

IT'S TO BE EXPECTED.

HE'S A TROUBLED AND CONFLICTED MAN.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU, REED RICHARDS?

HOW DO I *SOLVE* EVERYTHING?

AGGRESSIVELY.

YOU'RE ME.

CLEARLY, I AM NOT.

AND NEITHER ARE THESE MEN.

THEN WHO ARE YOU?

...

YES. YES, I DO.

MY NAME IS DR. RICHARDS, BUT I PREFER REED.

AS I'M SURE YOU DO.

YOU TWO...YOUR POWERS ARE LIKE THE MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY.

REED OF EARTH-6590 AND REED OF EARTH-12 WERE CHOSEN BECAUSE YOU WOULD FIND THEM *FAMILIAR.*

WE'VE FOUND THIS HELPS *EASE* THE TRANSITION.

AND WHAT ARE YOUR POWERS?

OH, THERE'S NOTHING *SPECIAL* ABOUT ME. I'M JUST A *MAN.*

COME WITH US. THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO SEE.

WHERE ARE WE?

A CONDUIT THAT LEADS TO A CONSTRUCT NESTLED INSIDE A FABRICATED POCKET REALITY.

IT'S A PLACE OUTSIDE OF BOTH THE UNIVERSAL STRUCTURE AND THE SPACE THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THEM.

DO YOU *UNDERSTAND?*

NO.

HERE, THE RULES THAT GOVERN ALL REALITY DO NOT APPLY.

IT IS *HERE* THAT WE DO OUR WORK.

AND WHERE ARE WE GOING?

TO MEET YOUR BROTHERS...

WELCOME TO THE *COUNCIL.*

THIS IS THE GOOD PLACE MADE BY GREAT MEN.

HERE, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

THIS IS AMAZING.

WHAT DO--

ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

UNIVERSAL BEACON ACTIVATED!

THERE HAS BEEN A GALACTUS INCURSION ON EARTH-2012.

UNEXPECTED.

MY FIRST DAY WAS NOWHERE NEAR AS INTERESTING AS THIS.

THIS IS WHAT YOU DO? PROTECT EARTHS FROM... *WHATEVER?*

POLICING TIME IS A REACTIVE POSITION, REED.

WE DO *MUCH MORE* THAN THAT-- JUST AS THE *FOUNDERS* OF THIS *COUNCIL* INTENDED.

WHO BUILT THIS PLACE?

WE DID, DR. RICHARDS.

THIS IS A DREAM MADE REALITY. A PLACE TO BECOME SOMETHING GREATER THAN WHAT YOU WERE.

WE WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO JOIN US...

IT'S TIME YOU REACHED YOUR *FULL POTENTIAL.*

YOU STOOD BESIDE ME
LARGER THAN LIFE AND HIT THE
IMPOSSIBLE

I DON'T BELIEVE IN MURDER.

HERE THEY COME!

GET READY!

BUT THIS MORNING, BEFORE BREAKFAST, I HELPED KILL A GALACTUS ON EARTH 2012.

THE BAXTER BUILDING.

GOOD MORNING.

MORNIN' DAD.

UFFF!

HERE YA GO, STRETCH-- YOU LOOK LIKE YA NEED THIS MORE THAN I DO.

ARTIE AND LEECH ARE DEFINITELY COMING; SO ARE KATIE AND JACK POWER...

THANKS. WHAT'S GOING ON OVER...

BIRTHDAY PARTY.

AH!

IS THERE ANYONE ELSE YOU WANT TO INVITE?

DO YOU THINK DAD COULD GET SPIDER-MAN TO COME?

WELL, HE'LL PROBABLY BE BUSY, BUT I'M SURE THAT HE COULD ASK...

WHAT DO YOU WANT THAT GUY FOR?

IF YOU WANT A SUPER-COOL, SUPER HERO AT YOUR PARTY--SOMEONE THAT SAYS, "FRANKLIN RICHARDS: LIVIN' THE DREAM!"-- THEN YOU'RE GONNA WANT THE HUMAN TORCH, KID.

I'M SURE I CAN SQUEEZE IT IN.

MOM. I'D *REALLY* RATHER HAVE SPIDER-MAN.

LISTEN, I'M GOING TO TELL YOU THIS BECAUSE NO ONE ELSE WILL, FRANKLIN.

SPIDER-MAN *SUCKS.*

YOU SUCK, SUCKFACE.

FRANKLIN!

APOLOGIZE.

OKAY, MOM. FINE.

SORRY, UNCLE SUCKFACE.

AND WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

I DON'T WANT THE KID EMBARRASSING HIMSELF.

UH-HUH. DO ME A FAVOR, YOU AND BEN GO PLAY WITH THE KIDS, OKAY?

I NEED TO TALK TO REED.

SURE.

OKAY, MIDGETS. MOVE IT.

YOU KNOW, STRETCHO-SCIENTIST-LEADERMAN, WHEN YOU DON'T KEEP THE WIFE HAPPY...IT'S THE WHOLE TEAM THAT SUFFERS.

SO...YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME WITH YOURSELF.

YES.

YES, I HAVE.

REED, I KNOW YOUR WORK IS IMPORTANT AND I WOULD NEVER TELL YOU WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR TIME...

SURE YOU WOULD. IN FACT... I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE GETTING READY TO DO.

I HATE IT WHEN YOU DO THAT.

YOU SPEND ALL DAY IN YOUR LAB AND THEN YOU ACT LIKE YOU KNOW EVERY THOUGHT THAT'S RUNNING THROUGH MY MIND.

SUSAN... WHEN I WAS 15, I SPLIT MY FIRST ATOM.

AND BY THE TIME I WAS 25, I HAD SPLICED A GENE AND CREATED NEW LIFE.

I HAVE BEEN TO THE STARS IN A ROCKET BUILT WITH MY OWN HANDS AND I HAVE SEEN THE DEATH AND BIRTH OF SUNS WITH MY VERY OWN EYES.

ALL OF THIS--MY OWN DOING.

I'M THE FOREMOST AUTHORITY IN COUNTLESS AREAS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND WHEN THE SMARTEST PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET NEED HELP, IT'S ME THEY CALL...

I *WILL NOT* APOLOGIZE FOR KNOWING THE THINGS I DO.

WHAT'S YOUR *POINT?*

I'M AN EXPERT IN MANY THINGS...

BUT IT'S *YOU* I'VE STUDIED THE MOST.

GIVE ME ONE MORE WEEK.

UNIVERSE 8901.
DAY ONE.

I COULD NEVER ACCEPT THE IDEA OF SOMEONE GOING HUNGRY.

SO I STARTED HERE. TERRA-FORMING A 25-SQUARE-MILE PATCH OF LAND ON A BARREN, UNINHABITABLE PLANET.

I CALLED IT *THE FARM.*

AND NOW THIS PLANET PROVIDES FOOD FOR THOSE THAT HAVE NONE...

THIS IS GOOD, REED.

WHAT?

IT TAKES A WHILE FOR ONE OF US TO GET ACCLIMATED TO BEING A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL.

TO GET USED TO WHAT IT IS THAT WE CAN DO...

YOUR ENTIRE LIFE YOU'VE HAD TO THINK IN TERMS OF "WHAT'S THE MOST ONE MAN CAN ACHIEVE?"-- AS IF CHOOSING BETWEEN THINGS IS A REQUIREMENT.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STOP THINKING SO SMALL...

I DON'T...

WHY WOULD I EVER STOP AT ONE, REED?

I HAVE HUNDREDS OF WORLDS LIKE THIS.

THE SCALE OF SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

YES. IT'S TIME TO LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD, DR. RICHARDS.

TAKE A LOOK...

NOW PRETEND THERE IS NO HORIZON.

AH, GOOD. A SHIPMENT IS GETTING READY TO GO THROUGH--YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS.

COOL.

LISTEN, THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK...

OF COURSE, WHAT IS IT?

YOU'RE WEARING AN INFINITY GAUNTLET--A GLOVE THAT WILL LET ANY WISH BECOME REALITY...

WHY BOTHER WITH ALL THIS WHEN YOU COULD JUST SNAP YOUR FINGERS?

IT DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY.

THE GAUNTLET ONLY FUNCTIONS IN THE UNIVERSE IT COMES FROM...

KM ZNIB OCRIX GIX!

AND WE'RE OPERATING IN A SLIGHTLY BIGGER ARENA THAN THAT.

BESIDES...

ZM CZMO LZCRI!!!

...THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH GETTING YOUR HANDS DIRTY, IS THERE?

UNIVERSE 45.
DAY THREE.

WHAM

YOU'VE SEEN THE FARM?

YES.

EVERYTHING WE DO HAS A *PURPOSE.*

IT WAS NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SEE *THAT* BEFORE YOU SEE *THIS*-- THE GREATER GOOD ALWAYS MAKES THE NECESSARY EVIL MORE TOLERABLE.

WATCH. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT LESSON.

HOLD HIM.

HRRNN...DO YOUR WORST, RICHARDS.

DOOM WILL NEVER STOP.

I KNOW YOU THINK THAT, VICTOR...

YOU COULD HAVE BEEN SO MUCH MORE.

AAARRRGGHHH!

WHAT DID YOU DO?!

DOOM?

THE COLLAR IS A PERMANENT CONTROL MECHANISM-- IT DESTROYS HIGHER BRAIN FUNCTIONS.

AND SO, JUST LIKE THAT, VICTOR VON DOOM IS GONE...AND ONLY THIS SHELL OF A THING REMAINS.

DOOM.

WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT TO HIM?

WHAT MADE THIS DOOM SO MUCH WORSE THAN ALL THE REST?

I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.

DOOM.

TK

POP!

THIS IS THE HOLE.

OH, NO...

DOOM?

THE HOLE.
DEEP BENEATH THE MAIN COUNCIL CHAMBER.

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

DOOM?

THIS IS WRONG.

OF COURSE IT IS. BUT, LIKE I SAID, NECESSARY.

YOU DON'T KNOW IT YET, BUT YOU'LL LEARN THAT THERE IS NO GREATER THREAT IN THE UNIVERSE THAN DOOM--HIS APPETITE IS UNMATCHED.

HE WILL NEVER *BREAK*. HE WILL NEVER *YIELD*.

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?

BECAUSE ON MY EARTH, A SMALL PORTION OF VICTOR'S DNA WAS SPLICED TOGETHER WITH MINE.

YOU SEE... I KNOW HIM IN A WAY THAT NONE OF YOU EVER WILL. I FEEL THOSE SAME URGES...

I'VE GOT SOME DOOM IN ME.

UPPER DIMENSIONAL SPACE.
UNIVERSE 12498.
DAY FOUR.

THIS IS SLIGHTLY DISORIENTING.

DON'T WORRY, REED, THAT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL...

OPERATING IN HIGHER-LEVEL SPACE TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO.

IN THIS DIMENSION, SCALE AND WILL ARE PERFECTLY PROPORTIONAL. *THIS* IS HOW WE PREFORM SURGERY ON THE UNIVERSE.

NOW, HAVE A LOOK AROUND AND SEE WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

IT SEEMS TO BE A VARIABLE DENSITY STAR IN A STATE OF UNNATURAL RAPID DECAY.

UH-HUH, AND WHAT COULD CAUSE SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

MY BEST GUESS RIGHT NOW WOULD BE A SUPER-SYMMETRICAL NUC...

OH!

CAREFUL!

OH, I THINK I'VE GOT IT.

REMOVE IT SLOWLY.

WELL, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT.

FRINGE DARK MATTER.

YES, THE REMNANTS OF THE BIG BANG...

LIKE A CRUEL PARENT, THE UNIVERSE REACHED OUT FROM THE PAST TO TRY AND TAKE BACK ONE OF HER CHILDREN.

YOU JUST SAVED 8 BILLION PEOPLE, REED...

FEEL GOOD?

YES. VERY GOOD.

WELL, THAT'S IT THEN.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

YOU'VE SEEN THE FARM?

YES.

AND THE HOLE?

YES.

THEN YOU'VE SEEN THE GOOD AND THE BAD...AND AFTER THAT, YOU STOOD BESIDE ME--LARGER THAN THE SUN--AND DID THE IMPOSSIBLE.

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO DECIDE, REED...

DO YOU WANT TO PLAY SUPER HERO THE REST OF YOUR LIFE...

...OR DO YOU WANT TO JOIN US AND SOLVE EVERYTHING?

THE BAXTER BUILDING.
DAY FIVE.

03:39

03:40

"I CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND, REED..."

...WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU, SON?

THE KIDS AT SCHOOL.

SOMEONE'S BEING MEAN TO YOU?

NO. NOTHING LIKE THAT--NO ONE MAKES FUN OF ME OR ANYTHING.

ACTUALLY, THEY THINK I'M COOL...

AND HOW IS THAT A PROBLEM, REED?

THEY LIKE ME, DAD...BUT THEY'RE NOT LIKE ME.

NO ONE IS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

THERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT YOU, REED.

ONE DAY, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP LOTS AND LOTS OF PEOPLE--MAYBE EVEN EVERYONE.

JUST MAYBE, IF YOU SET YOUR MIND TO CHANGING THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER, YOU CAN DO THAT.

BECAUSE THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN'T DO.

YOU REALLY BELIEVE THAT?

SON, I KNOW IT.

THE COUNCIL. DAY SIX.

SO...YOU'VE COME TO A DECISION?

I HAVE.

AND YOU'RE SURE?

I'VE WEIGHED ALL THE OPTIONS AND I THINK THAT I CAN DO THE MOST GOOD WITH THE COUNCIL. SO IF YOU'LL HAVE ME, I'D LIKE TO JOIN...

I BELIEVE I BELONG HERE.

THEN SOUND THE GREAT CYMBAL, LET THE WORD ECHO OUT...

OUR NUMBER HAS GROWN BY ONE. WE HAVE BEEN FOUND BY ANOTHER BROTHER.

WHAT SAY YOU, COUNCIL--IS THIS MAN...

BLARG! BLARG!

IMPOSSIBLE!

BROTHERS! BE WARY!
THE GATEWAY IS BREACHED!
THE COUNCIL IS COMPROMISED!
IT'S THE BRIDGE FROM UNIVERSE 4280.
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
I'M SORRY...SO SORRY.
THEY MADE ME.
WHO MADE YOU? SPEAK, MAN!
WHO MADE YOU?
THEY HAVE GROWN MAD-- THEY THINK THEY ARE GODS...
I THOUGHT I COULD STOP THEM ALONE...
I WAS WRONG. THEY TOOK ME-- TORE OPEN MY MIND...
I TOLD THEM ABOUT US.
AND NOW THEY HAVE COME-- AND FROM HERE THEY PLAN TO TAKE EVERYTHING.
WHO?
BA-BOOM
NOT GODS... BUT SOMETHING CLOSE ENOUGH...

CELESTIALS.

WE ARE MEN WE HAVE NO MASTERS

WHAT ARE THEIR INTENTIONS?
I CAN'T...
PUSH THROUGH.
MADNESS...
MADNESS...
THEY WANT THE COUNCIL AS A STAGING AREA FOR CONQUEST. OH...
THEY'VE NOTICED ME.
UNACCEPTABLE. WE HAVE REMOVED THE (INTRUDER/ANIMAL) FROM OUR (MIND/COLLECTIVE).
THIS PLACE LEADS TO ALL OTHERS--WE WOULD HAVE ALL OF IT.
KNEEL AND GAIN (FAVOR/FORGIVENESS).
NO. WE ARE MEN...
WE HAVE NO MASTERS.

4

FIND COVER!

DEFEND THE COUNCIL!

ZA-BOOM!

TO THE ARMORY!

HHHMMMMM

ZZZIIIKKK

REED!

I NEED YOU TO ACCESS MY UNIVERSE.

YES.

YOU'RE GOING TO USE YOUR INFINITY GAUNTLET?

MY BODY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT--YOU'LL BURN ME OUT.

I'LL DIE.

WE HAVE TO TURN THIS OR WE'RE FINISHED...

I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY, CAN YOU?

NO. NO, I CAN'T.

WELL...IT'S BEEN ONE HELL OF A RIDE.

FOR ALL OF US.

YOU FIVE--GET TO YOUR EARTHS AND BRING BACK WHATEVER YOU CAN TO HELP STOP THESE MONSTERS.

HURRY!

AAAEEE!!!

ACTIVATE BRIDGE!

TK

REED'S PRIMARY LAB. 5 MINUTES AGO...

I'M ALL DONE, VAL.

WHAT'D YOU PACK?

SOME COMICS. FOOD. SNACKS...

SOME JUICEBOXES.

WELL, DON'T SQUISH THEM, REMEMBER LAST TIME WHEN...

HEY!

GOT IT!

COOL.

WHAT IS IT?

INSURANCE, FRANKLIN.

YOUR HORSE READY?

YEP. READY AND RARIN'.

THEN LET'S GO...

WE DON'T WANT TO MISS OUR FLIGHT.

OKAY, THAT'S IT-- WE'RE OFF!

IT'S GONNA TAKE AN HOUR OR SO FOR US TO REACH THE PLATFORM WHERE THE NU-WORLD PORTAL IS...

YOU SURE IT'S OKAY FOR US TO BE GOIN', SUE--'CAUSE YOU AIN'T GONNA BE ABLE TA REACH US IF YOU NEED US.

GO.

HAVE A GOOD TIME. YOU DESERVE IT.

ALL RIGHT THEN...YOU HEARD THE LADY.

NO WAY TO BE BOTHERED, AND STUCK ON A WORLD THAT HAS NEVER KNOWN THE LOVE OF ONE JOHNNY STORM... HERE. WE. GO!

WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID?

"MOM, CAN WE PLEEEEEASE GO ON VACATION WITH UNCLE BEN AND UNCLE JOHNNY?"

"NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT," SHE SAID.

"MAYBE NEXT TIME--WHEN YOU'RE OLDER," SHE SAID.

AND WHAT DID WE THINK OF THAT?

IT DIDN'T SEEM FAIR.

IT WASN'T FAIR. NOT ONE BIT.

RIGHT... WAIT, WHY IS THAT AGAIN?

BECAUSE IT'S ALMOST YOUR BIRTHDAY.

RIIIGGHHT. THEN I WILL BE ONE YEAR OLDER.

FRANKLIN.

YEAH, VAL?

WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO ROUND UP.

I'M GONNA SHOOT THE THING NOW.

COOL.

PFFFFFFOOOO

4

THUNK!

I'VE BEEN THINKING.

MOSTLY ABOUT THE CONVERSATION WE HAD AT BREAKFAST THE OTHER MORNING.

ABOUT WHAT I *WANT* AND WHAT I *EXPECT*...

AND...AND...I WANT TO APOLOGIZE. NOT BECAUSE I WAS WRONG OR BECAUSE I REACTED POORLY, BUT BECAUSE SOMETIMES I FORGET WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO BE YOU...

YOU NEEDING TO FIX EVERYTHING, AND ME AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY NOT BEING ABLE TO HELP YOU OR EVEN SEE WHAT IT IS THAT NEEDS FIXING.

SO, IF THIS IS JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS YOU NEED TO WORK THROUGH ON YOUR OWN... I KNOW IT MUST BE VERY IMPORTANT.

WHAT I'M SAYING IS, YES, I MISS YOU--GOD, DO I--BUT YOU TAKE HOWEVER LONG YOU NEED...

BECAUSE WHAT I *WANT* IS FOR YOU TO BE YOU--AND WHAT I *EXPECT* IS FOR YOU TO DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT.

I'LL BE HERE WAITING WHEN YOU'RE DONE.

DEEP IN THOUGHT.. KEEP OUT.

THE COUNCIL MOMENTS LATER...

AH..NICE, REED. A UNIVERSAL ENTROPY GUN.

ZZAAKKK!

PUNCH A HOLE IN AN IMPENETRABLE OBJECT WITH AN ANTI-MATTER SHELL...

...AND DELIVER A PAYLOAD OF RAPID EQUILIBRIUM.

DAMNED EFFECTIVE WHEN CELESTIALS BLEED ENERGY.

NRRRNNNN.

I HOPE IT HURT.

THEY'RE RETREATING!

GOOD.

GET THIS MAN SOME AID.

STATUS REPORT.

THE COUNCIL HAS BEEN SECURED.

FIVE OF THEM ESCAPED THROUGH OTHER BRIDGES. FOUR THROUGH ONE, ONE THROUGH THE OTHER.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.

SHUT OFF ACCESS FROM THOSE UNIVERSES AND GATHER A HUNTING PARTY--SUMMON ANY REEDS THAT WEREN'T HERE--WE'RE GOING AFTER THEM.

ON IT.

REED, YOU STAY HERE...

LOOK AFTER THE WOUNDED.

BUT I CAN HELP.

YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH. YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAME BACK--THE WEAPONS YOU BROUGHT TURNED THE TIDE.

SO...THAT'S TWICE YOU SAVED MY LIFE TODAY.

I'LL HAVE TO OWE YOU...

YOU SAVED ME AS WELL, REED...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

NO.

WHEN THEY TORE MY MIND APART LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PLACE, THE CELESTIALS DID SOMETHING...

IT'S GONE, REED. MY GIFT... HOW MY MIND WORKED... GONE.

I'M SORRY... WE'LL FIND SOME WAY TO FIX THIS...TO FIX YOU.

WILL YOU NOW? AND WHAT IF YOU CAN'T?

I DON'T KNOW. THERE ARE OTHER THINGS-- IMPORTANT THINGS...

LIKE WHAT? FRIENDS? *FAMILY?*

NO ONE HERE HAS THOSE THINGS ANYMORE... WE GAVE ALL THAT UP FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

SO IF I DON'T HAVE THIS, I HAVE *NOTHING.*

WHAT DO YOU MEAN...NO ONE HERE HAS THOSE THINGS?

IT'S SIMPLE, REED:

THE COST OF SOLVING EVERYTHING IS *EVERYTHING.*

THE WORK WILL CONSUME YOU. HOW CAN WE THINK ABOUT LITTLE THINGS LIKE OUR PERSONAL LIVES WHEN THE FATE OF ALL WE KNOW LIES IN THE BALANCE?

SUSAN WILL STOP UNDERSTANDING, HER PATIENCE WILL RUN OUT AS SHE'S FORCED TO RAISE THE FAMILY ALL ALONE...

DOESN'T SHE DESERVE BETTER? BEN AND JOHNNY WILL GET ANGRY AND EVENTUALLY MOVE ON...

YOUR CHILDREN WILL RESENT YOU BECAUSE YOU WORK TOO MUCH AND LOVE TOO LITTLE...

ALL YOU WILL HAVE LEFT IS THIS.

I WOULD NEVER DO THAT.

YES, YOU WOULD... YOU WILL...IT'S THE PRICE, REED. IT ALWAYS GETS PAID.

EVEN KNOWING THIS IS HOW IT ENDS FOR ME, I WOULD GLADLY DO SO AGAIN.

NO, I DON'T ACCEPT THAT.

I WON'T.

WHO ARE YOU TO THINK YOU ARE DIFFERENT, REED?

YOU'LL BE BACK.

YOU ALWAYS COME BACK!

"I HAVE TO GO NOW, REED."

I WANT YOU TO STAY.

THERE ARE THINGS THAT HAVE TO BE DONE...

THINGS I MUST DO.

I DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE, SON...I WISH I DID.

HOW LONG WILL YOU BE GONE FOR?

A LONG TIME.

TOO LONG.

IF YOU TRULY NEED ME, I'LL BE AROUND...I PROMISE.

BUT WHAT IF I JUST WANT TO TALK?

REED, I'VE GIVEN YOU PLENTY OF ADVICE OVER THE YEARS--AND I KNOW YOU'VE LISTENED BECAUSE I SEE WHAT YOU'VE BECOME...

"...A MAN CAPABLE OF MAKING HIS OWN DECISIONS.

COMPUTER... SEAL AND LOCK THE DOOR TO THE MACHINE...

ERASE THE ROOM.

"BUT I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER ONE LAST THING BEFORE I GO..."

THE WORLD IS UGLY.

IT SHOULD NOT BE, BUT IT IS. IT WILL FORCE YOU TO DO THINGS YOU KNOW YOU SHOULD NOT DO--TO *COMPROMISE*--SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE.

THIS WEAKENS US. IT MAKES MEN LESS THAN WHAT WE SHOULD BE, AND IT WILL BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU HAVE AN EXTRA BURDEN...

BECAUSE YOU HAVE A GIFT THAT WILL AFFECT MANY PEOPLE.

BUT THIS...

...WITHOUT THIS...

...MEANS NOTHING.

IT'S A TERRIBLE THING FOR SOMEONE NOT TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL...

I KNOW.

AS I'VE GROWN OLDER, I'VE REALIZED THAT I DO NOT HAVE THE CHARACTER TO BE BOTH GOOD AND GREAT AT THE SAME TIME.

BUT YOU DO, REED... AND AS SUCH, ALL OF MY HOPES AND DESIRES REST IN YOU BECOMING WHAT I AM NOT.

WHEN YOU GROW UP, I EXPECT MORE.

SON...I EXPECT BETTER.

"I WANT YOU TO BE A BETTER FRIEND THAN I WAS.

"BE A BETTER HUSBAND.

"BE A BETTER FATHER...

"REED... BE A BETTER MAN."

THESE ARE THE
END TIMES

"I'M REALLY SORRY, MOM..."

"SORRY IS FINE, FRANKLIN, BUT THERE'S NO GETTING OUT OF THE FACT THAT YOU ARE BOTH IN TROUBLE...

"NOW TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED."

"WELL, FIRST THERE WAS A MAN..."

HURRY! SOMEONE HAS ACTIVATED THE PORTAL FROM THE OTHER SIDE!

IF YOU WANTED ME TO MOVE FASTER, YOU SHOULD HAVE BUILT ME A BETTER BODY!

I DID THE BEST I COULD WITH WHAT WAS AVAILABLE, ALYSSA. AT LEAST NOW YOU'RE NOT JUST A WELL-PRESERVED BRAIN ON A SHELF IN MY LAB.

NOW CONCENTRATE! WE HAVE TO GET TO THE GATEWAY BEFORE IT CLOSES OR WHOEVER COMES THROUGH WILL HAVE NO WAY BACK TO EARTH.

WOULD THAT BE SO BAD, TEDDY? I'M HAPPY HERE.

IF YOU HAD EYES, I WOULD TELL YOU TO USE THEM, LOVE.

THESE ARE THE END TIMES. THE SUN COLLAPSED AND FORMED A SINGULARITY. NOW WE'RE BEING SLOWLY SUCKED INSIDE.

SPACE-TIME IS BUCKLING!

YOUR HEART RATE IS ELEVATED, DEAR. PLEASE RELAX...YOU KNOW YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF HEART DISEASE IN YOUR FAMILY.

WE'RE TRAPPED IN A PETRI DISH OF UNNATURAL PROGRESS.

A FAKE WORLD FULL OF REFUGEES FROM 500 YEARS IN THE FUTURE UNDERGOING ABNORMAL EVOLUTIONARY ACCELERATION, THE CAUSE OF WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY KILL US ALL!

THIS IS *NOT* HOW THINGS WERE SUPPOSED TO BE!

HALT! YOU ARE NOW ENTERING ULTRON TERRITORY AND IN VIOLATION OF CURRENT TREATY!

TRESPASSING IS NOT PERMITTED.

OH, SHUT IT!

ZZAK! ZZAK!

THIS WAY!

IT'S JUST OVER THIS RIDGE.

WE'RE TOO LATE.

OH, BOY.

OKAY, THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT RIGHT.

STAY WHERE YOU ARE.

YA BETTER POINT THAT THING SOMEWHERE ELSE, PAL.

AUTHORITY FIGURES HAVE BEEN SUMMONED.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FLEE.

WHOA!

ZZAK!

ZZAK!

ZZAK!

ZZAK!

"THERE WAS A MAN...

"AND HE HAD A GUN AND HE WAS SHOOTIN' ROBOTS AND HE WAS ASKING FOR DADDY...

WHERE IS THE REST OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR?

WHERE IS REED RICHARDS!?!

"AND THEN THINGS GOT CRAZY."

UH...AT HOME.

WHERE BOTH OF THESE STOWAWAYS SHOULD BE...TOLD YA WE SHOULDA JUST TURNED AROUND.

FINE. BAD CALL...

NO OFFENSE, YELLING GUY WITH GUNS, BUT WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS PLACE?

YEAH, WE WERE JUST HERE TWO WEEKS AGO AND IT DIDN'T LOOK NOTHIN' LIKE THIS.

THAT'S BECAUSE IT HASN'T BEEN A *COUPLE WEEKS*, IT'S BEEN *EIGHT YEARS*...

AND I'M *TED CASTLE*; I BUILT NU-WORLD.

WE'VE MET.

UNFORTUNATE ABOUT REED... NOW WE HAVE TO RUN!

EXACTLY. BACK THROUGH THE PORTAL AND ALL THE WAY HOME.

MISTER, YOU KNOW THERE'S A BLACK HOLE IN THE SKY, RIGHT?

IT'S WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR SUN, AND YOU CAN'T USE THE PORTAL BECAUSE IT WAS DAMAGED WHEN WE FIRST GOT HERE.

I WAS HOPING YOUR FATHER COULD FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET IT WORKING AGAIN.

WELL, I--

QUIET, YOUNG LADY! NO MORE TIME FOR TALKING...

I HAVE TO HIDE YOU BEFORE THE ARMIES OF LIGHTWAVE AND ULTRON GET HERE.

DEAREST... BAD NEWS ON THAT FRONT.

GET THE KIDS OUT OF HERE.

BEN, I...

GET GOIN'! I'LL CATCH UP IN A SECOND.

OH, AND JOHNNY...

YEAH?

YOU'RE THE WORST TRAVEL AGENT EVER.

YEAH.

I'M IN A BAD MOOD, ROBOTS. ALL I WANTED...

SMASH!

WAS...

A... NICE...

SMASH!

QUIET...

VACATION.

WELL, I'M SORRY, BEN...

BUT THIS MOST CERTAINLY IS NOT GOING TO BE *THAT.*

BA-BOOOM!

UNCLE BEN!

MOVE! HE CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE, TED?

VERY BAD THINGS, SON.

AT FIRST, EVERYTHING WAS FINE. PERFECT.

A NEW GOVERNMENT...A NEW SOCIETY. EVEN TO AS RELUCTANT A BELIEVER AS MYSELF, IT WAS SALVATION FOR A WORLD FULL OF REFUGEES.

THEN OUR STAR COLLAPSED IN ON ITSELF.

NOW, NU-WORLD SKIRTS THE EDGE OF THE EVENT HORIZON, AND TIME HERE FLOWS FASTER THAN NORMAL SPACE.

THE WILL OF EIGHT BILLION SURVIVORS WAS BROKEN. THAT'S WHEN LIGHTWAVE AND ULTRON TOOK OVER.

AFTER THAT, THERE WAS *REVOLUTION* AND WAR.

"THEY BEGAN TO CONTROL THE POPULACE THROUGH THEIR OMNIPATH, NATALIE X...

"SEDATED AND DOCILE, MOST PEOPLE ON NU-WORLD SLEEPWALK THROUGH THEIR LIVES."

MOST, BUT NOT ALL.

HEY! WHAT'S THAT?

THE PINNACLE OF HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT...

IT'S SO HIGH THAT, IF THEY ARE ABLE TO REACH THE PROPER ALTITUDE, THE GRAVITY OF THE BLACK HOLE WILL SUCK THEM OUT INTO SPACE AND TOWARDS THE ABYSS.

FOR THOSE NOT NUMBED BY STATE CONTROL...

BRAVERY. ASCENDANCE.

"A LITTLE JETPACK AND THE PULL OF OBLIVION MAKES THEM BOTH ASTRONAUTS AND ANGELS.

"AND WHAT LIES ON THE OTHER SIDE?

"THEY'LL KNOW BEFORE YOU OR I WILL."

YEAH, AND EIGHT YEARS HAS DONE WONDERS FOR YOU IN THE CATEGORY OF "SOUNDING LESS CRAZY"...

WHERE ARE WE GOING, TED?

THE ONLY PLACE I KNOW YOU'LL BE SAFE, SON. SANCTUARY. THE CENTER OF THE EARTH.

HOME.

THE FORTRESS CAPITAL OF NU-WORLD.

SHE WAS THERE?

IT WAS HER.

CASTLE WILL TAKE THEM TO THE WHEEL--WE MUST GO THERE AND TAKE THE RICHARDS DAUGHTER.

I DISAGREE. WE SHOULD NOT BREAK THE PACT. THAT MAN HAS KEPT ALL OF US ALIVE. AND THE GIRL--

MY DAUGHTER IS OVERLY AGGRESSIVE, ALEX. PERHAPS IT'S A GENETIC DEFECT... BUT WE ***MUST*** TAKE THE CHILD.

WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?

WE'VE ALREADY LOST ONE EARTH, AND WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF LOSING ANOTHER...

WE PROMISED TO SAVE AS MANY OF OUR PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE. ARE YOU NO LONGER WILLING TO DO THAT?

ABDUCT SUSAN RICHARDS' DAUGHTER?

NO...

HERE, I DRAW THE LINE, OLD FRIEND.

SO NOW WE GO AFTER THEM?

NO...I THINK PATIENCE IS WHAT'S CALLED FOR.

WE HAVE BEN GRIMM... THEY WILL COME TO US.

THE HOLDING AREA OF THE FORTRESS.

OH, MY ACHIN' HEAD.

YOU WERE OUT FOR QUITE SOME TIME...

WHA?

I WAS BEGINNING TO GET WORRIED.

BANNER JR.? WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' DOWN HERE IF YOUR PALS ARE RUNNIN' EVERYTHING?

I ASK THE WRONG QUESTIONS TOO OFTEN. I DO THE WRONG THINGS.

I MAKE THEM ALL REMEMBER WHAT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE.

SO YOU'RE A PRISONER TOO, HUH?

ONLY OF CONSCIENCE, BEN.

AND ONLY THAT AS LONG AS I CHOOSE.

THE WHEEL.
THE CENTER OF NU-WORLD.

SAY WHAT?!

THE PORTAL HAS BEEN DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR. YOU AND YOU'RE FRIENDS ARE STUCK HERE.

NO WAY, WEIRD GUY! I WANNA GET UNCLE BEN AND THEN I WANNA GO HOME!

AGAIN...THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT THE PORTAL, BUT JOHNNY AND ALYSSA ARE OUT TRYING TO RESCUE YOUR FRIEND NOW.

SEE?

THE WORLD SYSTEM SHOWS THAT HE'S IN THE HOLDING FACILITY BENEATH THE FORTRESS. THERE'S AN ACCESS TUNNEL...

EXCUSE ME.

RUNNING BENEATH--

EXCUSE ME. BUT WHAT'S THE EXACT PROBLEM WITH THE PORTAL?

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN--

MISTER, YOU *NEED* TO TELL ME!

FINE.

BUILDING THE PORTAL IS NO PROBLEM--WE COULD DO THAT IN THIS VERY LAB--BUT WE LACK TWO OTHER THINGS: AN ADEQUATE POWER SOURCE AND...WAIT, IS THAT?

UH-HUH.

SO WHAT'S THE OTHER THING WE NEED?

OUTSIDE THE FORTRESS.
LATER...

WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE QUICKLY ONCE WE ARE INSIDE, JOHNNY.

I PROMISE, NO ONE WANTS TO GET OUT OF HERE FASTER THAN...

HEY!

RUMBLE RUMBLE

WELL.

WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT?

THE AUTOMATONS AND THE HUMANS HAVE SPLIT. THEY'RE LEAVNG US BEHIND.

THINGS ARE FALLING APART QUICKLY NOW.

WE GO THIS WAY.

THEY ARE HERE.

BACK AT THE WHEEL.

OKAY. SWITCHING THE POWER ON.

CLICK!

HHHMMMMMMMM

AWESOME. NOW FOR THE OTHER THING.

THE MATH NECESSARY TO OPEN THIS PORTAL BACK TO EARTH.

:SIGH:...A TEAM OF 100 SCIENTISTS WORKED THAT OUT WHEN WE FIRST BUILT THIS PLACE.

IT'S WHY I WAS HOPING YOUR FATHER WAS WITH YOU. HE'S THE ONLY PERSON I'VE EVER MET WITH THE ABILITY TO DO CALCULATIONS LIKE THAT BY HIMSELF.

YEAH...

PROMISE ME YOU WON'T TELL ANYONE, BUT I'M ALREADY SMARTER THAN MY DAD.

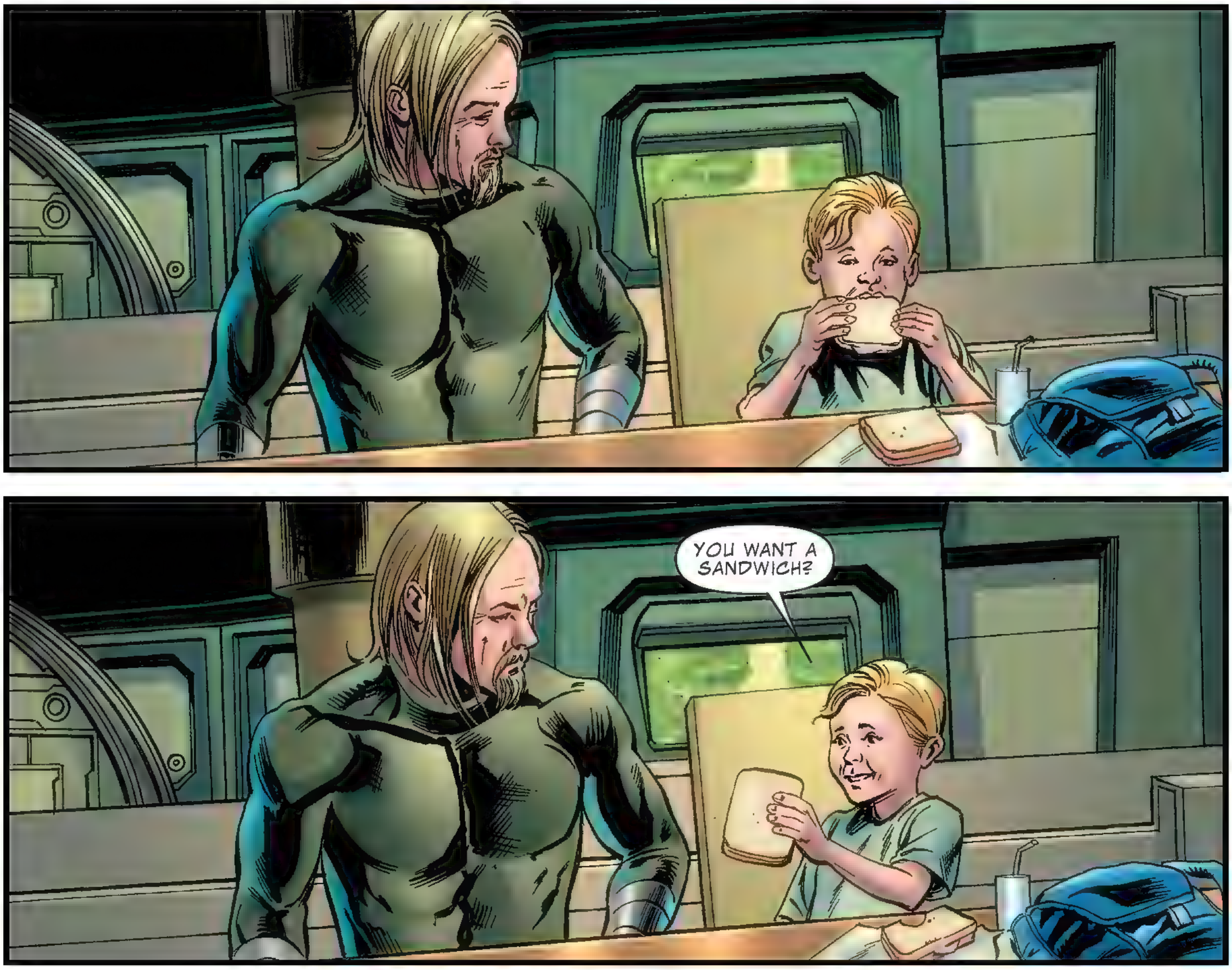
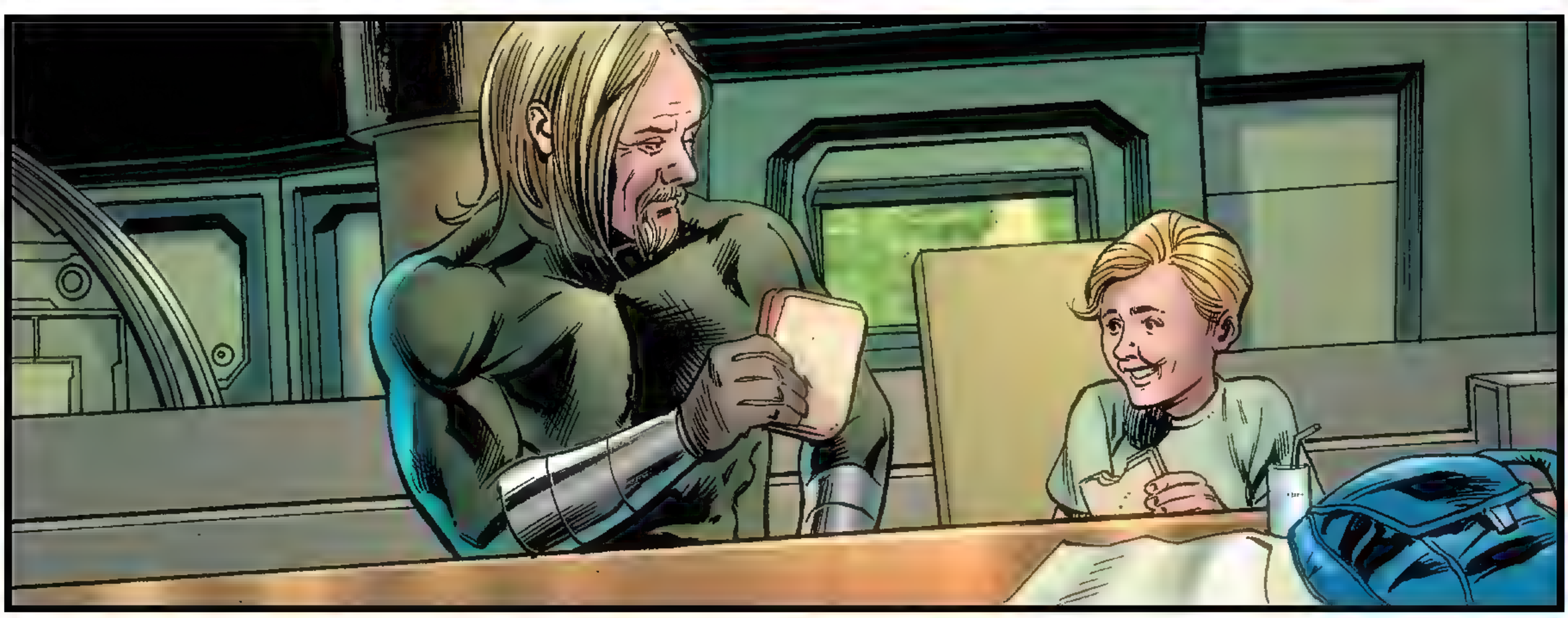
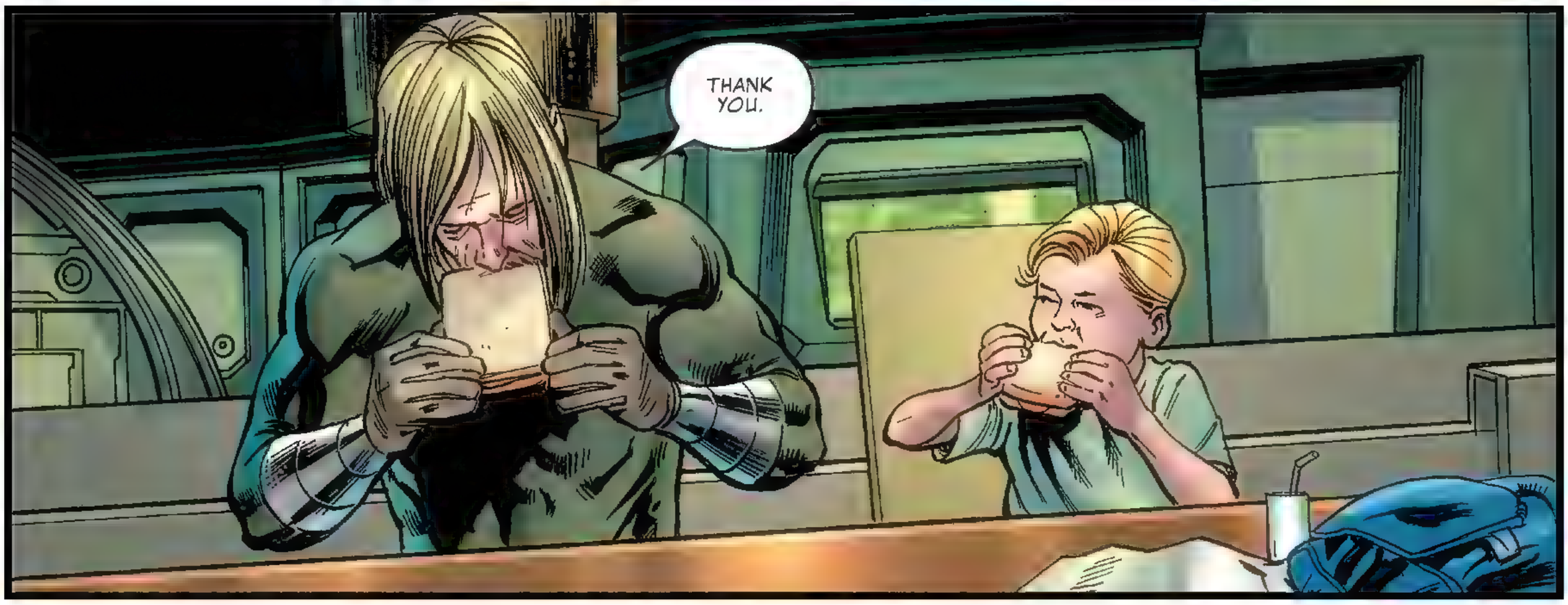
I CAN *DO THIS*... *GO PACK!* AS SOON AS EVERYONE GETS BACK, WE'RE GOING HOME.

I CAN'T GO.

I CAN'T LEAVE ALL THESE PEOPLE. THEY NEED ME. THERE ARE CONSTANT ADJUSTMENTS-- CONSTANT CORRECTIONS-- NECESSARY TO KEEP US FROM BEING PULLED INTO THE BLACK HOLE.

EVENTUALLY WE'LL LOSE--THE PULL WILL BE TOO GREAT AND EVERYTHING WILL END...

BUT A GOOD CAPTAIN GOES DOWN WITH HIS WORLD.


YOU WANT A SANDWICH?


THANK YOU.

THE FORTRESS.

HEY, WHO'S UGLY AND NEEDS SAVIN'?

KIDDO, I BEEN BEATIN' ON THESE BARS FOR THE LAST HOUR...

YOU GET ME OUTTA HERE AND I TAKE BACK EVERYTHING BAD I'VE EVER SAID ABOUT YOU.

WELL, DON'T WORRY, BEN. THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.

CLICK!

ALYSSA, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

THAT'S A...

A...

OH.

I CAN'T... <BZZT>

I CAN'T FEEL... <BZZT> MY... <BZZT> LEGS.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY, DEAR.

PSIONICS!

HELLO, JOHNNY. YOU HAVEN'T WRITTEN, YOU HAVEN'T CALLED... WHAT'S A GIRL TO THINK?

YOU KILLED HER! I-- WHOOLF!

SHE WAS AN ORGAN IN A JAR. IT WAS GOING TO CATCH UP TO HER EVENTUALLY.

TED WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU...AND YOU CAN'T RUN THIS WORLD WITHOUT HIM.

YOU LET GO OF BEN BEFORE I--

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, JOHNNY. I'VE GOTTEN MUCH STRONGER THESE LAST FEW YEARS-- I'LL CRUSH HIM INTO LITTLE TINY PEBBLES.

DON'T LISTEN TO-- UURRKK.

OKAY... LISTEN.

AS FOR TED CASTLE, YES, HE CAME UP WITH THE WAY TO SAVE THIS WORLD AND ONLY HE CAN RUN THE BACKWARD LEGACY SYSTEMS THAT IT USES, BUT WE'RE NOT GOING TO NEED HIM ANYMORE.

SEE, JOHNNY, WE KNOW HOW GIFTED THAT LITTLE GIRL IS GOING TO BE...

WE'LL GET VAL TO BUILD A PORTAL AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO DO WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE DONE IN THE FIRST PLACE: SEND EVERYONE BACK TO EARTH...

SQUISH!

AND TEACH YOU PEOPLE HOW TO--

WHAT?

SMASH!

YOU OKAY?

YEAH...NICE, EX-GIRLFRIEND THERE, PAL.

C'MON, WE'RE GOING HOME.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, BANNER?

STAYING HERE.

LIGHTWAVE AND I HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS...

AND I DON'T RUN.

"AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEY GOT BACK TO THE CENTER OF NU-WORLD?"

"I ASKED MR. CASTLE IF HE WAS SURE HE DIDN'T WANT TO COME WITH US..."

"HE HAD TO STAY?"

"YES. 'CAUSE NO ONE ELSE COULD DO HIS JOB...

"ONLY HE COULD PILOT THE *WORLD*.

"I WONDER..."

"WONDER WHAT?"

"DO YOU THINK WE'LL SEE THEM AGAIN?

"THE KING OF LIGHT?

"THE GREEN MAN?

"THE CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP?"

I DON'T KNOW, FRANKLIN.

THAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING IN OUR FAMILY. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT EXCITING THING IS GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT.

NOW, TIME FOR BED.

BUT, MOM, I CAN'T SLEEP.

WELL THAT'S JUST TOUGH, MISTER...YOU'VE GOT A BIG DAY AHEAD OF YOU TOMORROW.

HEY, LOOK AT THAT...

12:03

IT'S AFTER MIDNIGHT.

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, DON'T YOU?

UH-HUH.

IT'S MY FAVORITE DAY OF THE ENTIRE YEAR...

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FRANKLIN.

ALL HOPE LIES WITH DOOM

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

THE BAXTER BUILDING.

HEY, FRANKLIN, MOM SENT ME TO GET YOU...

EVERYONE'S WAITING.

DID YOU FINISH IT?

UH-HUH. GOT IT RIGHT HERE.

YOU'RE SURE IT'S GOING TO WORK AND NOT SCREW UP OR ANYTHING?

YOU'LL BE HAPPY.

AWESOME.

4

HEY, NO ONE'S HERE!

SURPRISE!!!

BIRTHDAY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, RETARD.

YOU BETTER HAVE GOTTEN ME SOMETHING GOOD.

FRANKLIN!

KATIE!

JACK!

I DIDN'T THINK YOU GUYS WERE GOING TO MAKE IT.

MISS A CHANCE AT A POWER PACK REUNION, ARE YOU KIDDING?

OKAY, BIRTHDAY BOY...LET'S BLOW OUT SOME CANDLES.

AWWWW, MOM...

HUSH.

NOW...

...MAKE A WISH!

FRANK

SO... WHO WANTS CAKE?

HELLO, ALEX, HOW ARE YOUR PARENTS DOING?

THEY'RE GOOD, DR. RICHARDS-- THANKS FOR ASKING... AND THANK YOU FOR HAVING US OUT.

OF COURSE. MY PLEASURE.

WHEN DID YOU THREE ARRIVE IN THE CITY?

WE FLEW IN LAST NIGHT. KATIE AND JACK WERE PRETTY EXCITED-- THEY BARELY SLEPT.

I CAN TELL, THEY LOOK EXHAUSTED.

SO, HOW WAS SCHOOL?

BORING. *FRUSTRATING.*

COMING FROM A NINETEEN YEAR OLD WHO SHOULD BE PREPARING TO DO POST-GRADUATE WORK, THAT'S NOT SURPRISING. IT'S TOUGH BEING THAT GIFTED SOMETIMES.

IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING... WHAT'S NEXT?

HONESTLY, DR. RICHARDS, I HAVE NO IDEA.

WHY DO YOU ASK?

I'VE GOT A SPECIAL PROJECT COMING UP...

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT COMING TO WORK WITH ME?

BENTLEY, WOULD YOU LIKE A PIECE OF CAKE?

THIRTY-TWO.

WHY DON'T WE FOCUS ON EATING ONE AT A TIME, DEAR.

NO...I AM THIRTY-TWO, NOT BENTLEY.

EXCUSE ME?

I AM THE THIRTY-SECOND DERIVATIVE OF MY FATHER, THE SUPER-GENIUS MASTER-INTELLECT, BENTLEY WITTMAN.

I WAS PRECEDED BY THIRTY-ONE FAILURES. THESE FAILURES WERE NOT GIVEN A NAME--BECAUSE NO ONE IS GIVEN A NAME UNTIL THEY HAVE EARNED IT.

AS I HAVE YET TO EARN MY NAME, I DON'T HAVE ONE.

I HOPE TO ONE DAY BE WORTHY OF HIS NAME, AND IF I DID THAT WOULD MAKE ME AN ANOMALY--AN ANOMALY IS SOMETHING SPECIAL--BEING SPECIAL, I WOULD THEREFORE BE WORTHY OF A NAME...

UNTIL THEN, THIRTY-TWO WANTS THE CORNER PIECE.

ENJOY YOUR CAKE, BENTLEY.

HEY! EVERYBODY PAY ATTENTION!

WE GOTTA SPECIAL GUEST THIS YEAR. EVERYBODY PUT YOUR HANDS TOGETHER FOR, AND GIVE A WARM BAXTER BUILDING WELCOME TO, THE SPECTACULAR...

...SPIDER-MAN!

THAT'S NOT SPIDER-MAN!

HUH? THAT'S FUNNY...

BECAUSE I KNOW I SAW HIM AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE...

THERE'S SPIDER-MAN!

OH, THIS IS JUST RIDICULOUS... HE COULDN'T JUST WALK IN THE DOOR? HE COULDN'T JUST ENTER THE ROOM LIKE EVERYONE ELSE?

PLENTY OF PEOPLE HERE THAT COULD MAKE A DRAMATIC ENTRANCE... YOU DON'T SEE ME ON FIRE, FLYING AROUND... LOOK AT ME. LOOK AT ME.

I HATE THAT GUY.

WELL, HELLO THERE, SPIDEY.

BENJAMIN.

THANKS FOR THE LIFT.

SO...I HEARD THERE WAS A BIRTHDAY BOY AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE...

ANYONE IN THE GENERAL VICINITY FIT THAT DESCRIPTION?

ME! IT'S ME!

COOL. SO...

...YOU WANNA GO FOR A RIDE?

WELL?

AT LEAST THE KID'S HAVING A GOOD TIME.

LATER.

AHEM! YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE.

HEY. I JUST WANTED TO SAY THANKS FOR COMING AND THANKS FOR ALL THE COOL GIFTS...

BUT I THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE EVEN COOLER IF THIS YEAR I GAVE EVERYBODY SOMETHING.

WHAT IS THIS?

KATIE AND JACK, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE COMING, SO I WAS JUST GOING TO MAIL YOU GIFT CERTIFICATES...

THERE'S SOMETHING THERE FOR ALEX AND JULIE, TOO.

SPIDER-MAN, I WAS HOPING YOU'D COME, BUT I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO GET YOU...

HEY, IT'S A BOOK! LET'S SEE...

I GOT SOME HELP FROM UNCLE JOHNNY.

...A LOSER'S GUIDE TO PICKING UP WOMEN.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

I'M A GIVER.

KEY?

LEECH, I TALKED TO DAD ABOUT IT AND I WANTED YOU TO HAVE THAT...

FRANKLIN TOLD ME THAT YOU MIGHT NOT BE COMPLETELY HAPPY WHERE YOU ARE LIVING NOW.

I WOULD NEVER IMPOSE, BUT, IF YOU WANT TO, WE'D LIKE FOR YOU TO COME STAY WITH US. THAT'S A KEY TO YOUR NEW ROOM.

THAT ONE'S YOURS...

...AND THERE'S ONE FOR YOU, TOO, ARTIE.

IT'S IN THE BOTTOM OF THE BOX, BUT THE OTHER THING IS SOMETHING I ASKED VAL TO MAKE FOR YOU.

I KNOW YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO COMMUNICATE SINCE YOU LOST YOUR MUTANT PROJECTION POWERS...THIS SHOULD HELP WITH THAT.

JUST PUT IT ON AND CONCENTRATE.

EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE A LOT BETTER NOW, ARTIE.

WELCOME HOME, GUYS!

DID YOU...

I HAD NO IDEA.

THOSE ARE SOME MIGHTY AMAZING KIDS YOU GOT THERE, MRS. RICHARDS.

GOOD BIRTHDAY?

GREAT BIRTHDAY.

IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING...

...YOU LOOK AMAZING FOR SOMEONE WHO'S SON JUST TURNED...

NOT.

ANOTHER.

WORD.

LATER.

TIMEQUAKE. CONDITION: RED.

CONTAINMENT FIELD ACTIVATED AND THE CLOCK IS RUNNING.

AND AS EXPECTED... HERE COMES COMPANY.

THERE'S SOME KIND OF BARRIER BLOCKING OUR WAY!

URGH! IT GOES INTO THE WALL!

AND I CAN'T BURN MY WAY IN!

IT'S IMPENETRABLE-- NOTHING'S GETTING THROUGH...

...OH, GOD.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

NO!

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF IT TAKES THE REST OF MY LIFE, I'M GOING TO FIND YOU...

I'M GOING TO FIND YOU AND MAKE YOU WISH YOU HAD NEVER BEEN BORN.

IT'S ALL RIGHT...I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU.

WHO ARE YOU...WHY ARE YOU HERE?

I WAS SENT TO FIND YOU.

TO GIVE YOU A WARNING...

THE FUTURE MUST BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS.

LISTEN CLOSELY, BECAUSE EACH WORD I SAY WAS CHOSEN CAREFULLY--IT IS JUST FOR YOU, VAL. NO ONE ELSE CAN KNOW THIS.

THERE WILL BE A WAR BETWEEN THE FOUR CITIES.

THE DEAD MUST NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

THE FUTURE MAN MUST RETURN TO SAVE THE PAST.

AND ALL HOPE LIES IN DOOM.

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE YOU?

BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SENT ME HERE.

PING!

TIME'S UP, I HAVE TO GO...

YOU CAN DO THIS, VAL. YOU HAVE TO.

HEY!

YES?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, RETARD.

VAL!

ARE YOU OKAY?

I'M FINE, DADDY.

EVERYTHING'S FINE.

WHAT HAPPENED?

LATER.

THEY'RE FINALLY IN BED.

SO, LET'S HEAR IT.

I CHECKED THE BUILDING LOGS, CAMERA FOOTAGE AND THE BACKUPS AS WELL... NOTHING'S THERE. IT'S LIKE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

ARE THE KIDS OKAY?

I RAN EVERY TEST I COULD THINK OF ON THEM.

THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ANYTHING WRONG... FRANKLIN CHECKS OUT. BETTER THAN EVER, ACTUALLY.

VAL SAID NOTHING HAPPENED IN HER ROOM-- THAT SHE HID UNTIL HE STARTED TO LEAVE...

WE GOT LUCKY.

AND EVEN LATER THAT EVENING...

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Gunslingers Only!

REST...

...AND REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE.

ALL ALONE IN HIS ROOM...

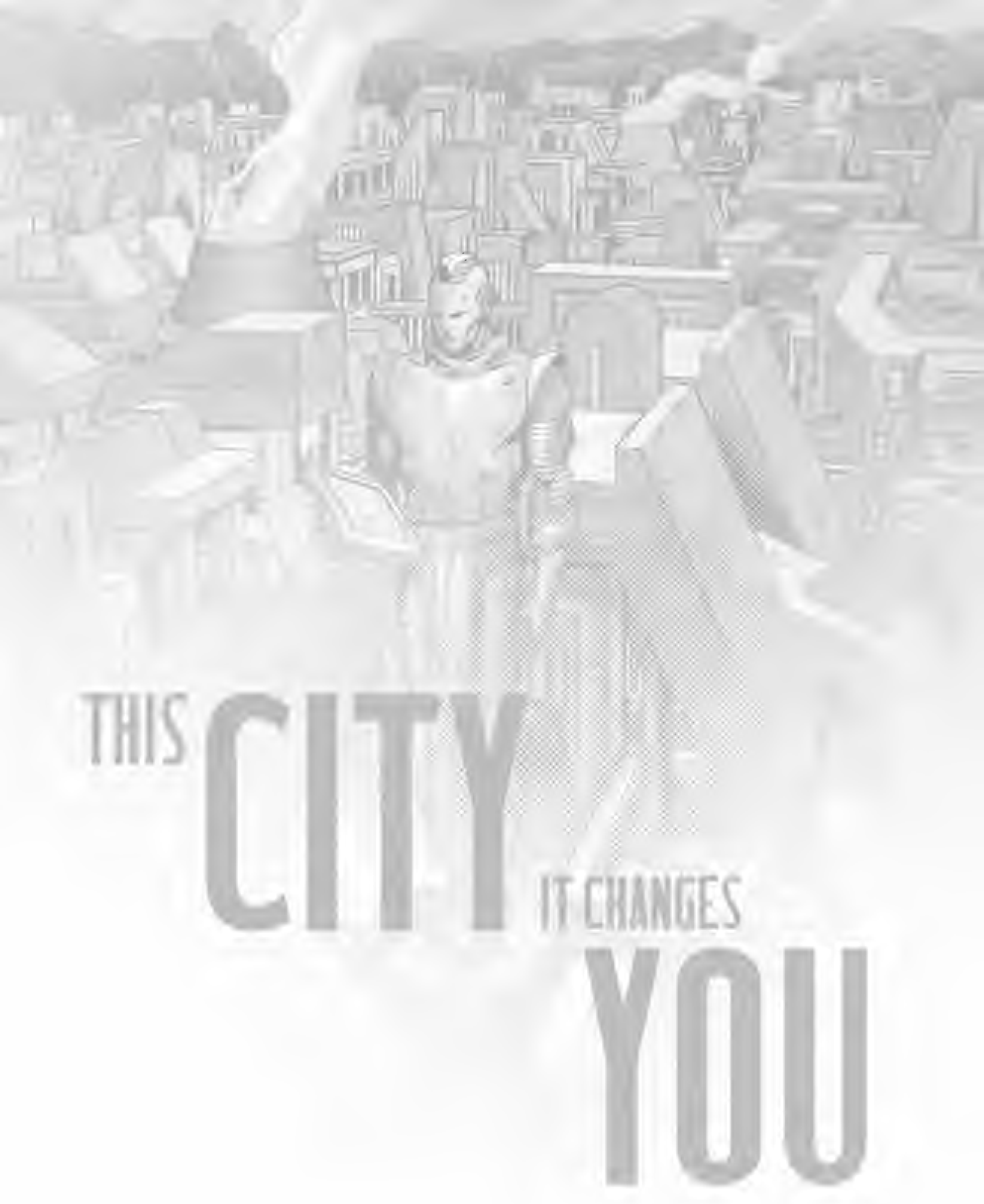
A LITTLE BOY CREATES A BABY UNIVERSE.

THIS
IS A
SUMMONING

FANTASTIC FOUR

VOL TWO

PRIME ELEMENTS


THIS
CITY
IT CHANGES
YOU

THE BAXTER BUILDING.
NEW YORK CITY.

BAAAMMM!

WELCOME TO THE BAXTER BUILDING. HOME OF THE--

POP

ALERT: RECOGNITION OVERRIDE //HOSTILE IDENTIFIED//

SECURITY PARAMETERS COMING ONLINE.

WARNING!

"AUTHORITY FIGURES ARE BEING ALERTED."

4 SECONDS LATER...

I THINK THAT'S FAR ENOUGH!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

FANTASTIC NUMBERED FOUR...

I BRING YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE MOLE MAN.

SPIT IT OUT, BEFORE I KNOCK YOUR HEAD...

...BACK ON OR SOMETHIN'.

WELL?

PLEASE CLEAR THE LOBBY.

R-R-RUMMBLE

MY OLDEST OF ADVERSARIES...

THERE IS CHAOS IN THE UNDERWORLD... SUBTERRANEA IS IN PERIL...

AND I BELIEVE YOU ARE MY ONLY HOPE.

YOU SAY THE PROBLEM IS HERE?

THIS READS AS NOTHING MORE THAN A GEOTHERMAL VENT.

IT'S DISGUISED SO THAT IT APPEARS NATURAL, BUT I ASSURE YOU, DR. RICHARDS, THE ASCENSION ENGINE THAT POWERS THE ABANDONED CITY IS MOST CERTAINLY NOT.

YOU'VE HEARD OF THE CITY, YES?

NO.

THE CITY IS THE FAILED *LIFE'S WORK* OF HERBERT WYNDHAM.

THE *HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.*

"HE BUILT A DARWIN BUBBLE. AWAY FROM THE PRYING EYES AND HYPOCRISY OF MAINSTREAM SCIENCE, HE WOULD FINALLY BE ABLE TO EXPERIMENT IN A CLOSED ENVIRONMENT AS HE WISHED...

"HE WOULD PUSH THE LIMITS OF EVOLUTIONARY SCIENCE AND THEN--TRIUMPHANT IN HIS DISCOVERY--RAISE THE CITY TO THE SURFACE FOR ALL TO SEE."

IT DIDN'T WORK.

"INSTEAD OF RAPID EVOLUTION, AS IT SPUN UP, THE ASCENSION ENGINE BEGAN TO DEVOLVE THOSE WITHIN THE CITY.

"THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY AND HIS NEW MEN WERE FORCED TO FLEE. THEY ALSO FAILED TO DEACTIVATE THE MACHINE.

"THE CITY WAS LATER FOUND BY MY MOLOIDS. NOT KNOWING WHAT IT WAS--AND POSSESSING THE IGNORANT CURIOSITY OF LESSER CREATURES--THEY VENTURED INSIDE.

"WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE DEVOLVED FORM OF THE MOLOID WAS SOMETHING RESEMBLING A HUMAN BEING?

"WHO COULD HAVE GUESSED THERE WOULD BE A MORE ALARMING CHANGE?"

IF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY HAD REMAINED IN THE CITY UNTIL THE ENGINE COMPLETELY SPUN UP, HIS INTELLIGENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN MAGNIFIED...

INCREASED TO A SUPERHUMAN LEVEL.

FASCINATING.

IS THAT WHY YOU CAN SPEAK? IS THE CHANGE PERMANENT?

YES...FOR THOSE WHO, LIKE MYSELF, WERE BORN IN THE CITY.

I LEFT BECAUSE WE ARE CONSIDERED PARIAHS...

OUTCASTS.

THAT'S OKAY, MR. HEAD. IF YOU NEED TO, YOU CAN STAY HERE WITH US.

I HATE TO BE *THAT GUY*, BUT WHAT DOES ANY OF THIS HAVE TO DO WITH US?

BECAUSE, MY BOY, THEY ARE GOING TO RAISE THE CITY.

DEEP WITHIN THE AEOLUS' CAVE PASSAGE LEADING TO SUBTERRANEA. LATER.

EVERYONE GET COMFORTABLE.

THE SHIP WASN'T BUILT FOR THIS, SO THINGS COULD GET A LITTLE HAIRY.

WE COULD HAVE BURROWED STRAIGHT DOWN.

NO...DRILLING DOWN WOULD COLLAPSE THE CAVERN AND THE CITY LIES ON A FAULT LINE--THAT COULD TRIGGER A SEISMIC EVENT, SO WE'LL TAKE A SAFER APPROACH.

AND I'VE BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE.

MY GOD... IS THAT--?

YES.

THIS IS WHERE I BURIED THE GALACTUS FROM THE FUTURE.

THIS MARKS THE EDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD.

DEEP WITHIN SUBTERRANEA.
LATER.

BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?

IT AIN'T BAD, BUT THAT AIN'T REALLY WHAT I'M PAYIN' ATTENTION TO...

IS SOMETHING BOTHERING YOU, GRIMM?

NOPE, NOT A THING.

I'M JUST WAITIN' UNTIL YOU SHOW YOUR TRUE COLORS SO I CAN CLOBBER ME A LITTLE PERSON.

AH, YOU STILL THINK I'M UP TO MY OLD WAYS.

YOU SAYIN' THAT AIN'T THE CASE, PAL?

I NO LONGER WANT TO DESTROY SOCIETY, GRIMM... I DON'T EVEN CARE ABOUT THE SURFACE.

LOOK AT WHAT THAT PLACE HAS BECOME--THE FALL OF MAN AND THE END OF THE WORLD...

I JUST WANT MY KINGDOM, AND I WANT IT TO BE THAT...*MINE*.

YOU'RE TALKIN' ABOUT THE MOLOIDS GOIN' TO THIS CITY AND BECOMIN' SOMETHIN' OTHER THAN YOUR SLAVES, RIGHT?

CERTAIN CREATURES SHOULD BE CONTENT WITH WHAT THEY ARE.

NOBODY SHOULD HAVE TO BE A MONSTER THAT DON'T WANT TO BE.

HRMPH. DID YOU KNOW THAT THE MOLOIDS IN THE CITY REFUSE TO REPRODUCE?

THEY DID AT FIRST, BUT THE PROCESS THEY UNDERWENT MADE THEIR CHILDREN LIKE THE ONE YOU MET AT THE BAXTER BUILDING...

JUST AS INTELLIGENT, BUT THEY STILL HAD THEIR OLD SKIN...A CONSTANT REMINDER OF WHAT HAS BEEN, SO THEN THEY STOPPED HAVING BABIES.

NOW, THEY ONLY GROW THEIR NUMBERS BY ABSORBING MY PEOPLE INTO THE CITY.

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DID WITH THOSE CHILDREN? THEY ABANDONED THEM IN THE AREA UNDERNEATH THE CITY.

"THEY LEFT THEM TO SURVIVE ALL ALONE... NOW, THERE ARE ONLY A FEW LEFT.

"SO I ASK YOU--WHICH IS BETTER...?"

SIMPLE CREATURES WHO KNOW NOTHING MORE THAN COMMUNITY AND THE COMFORT OF THEIR FAMILY, OR ENLIGHTENED INDIVIDUALS WHO ABANDON THOSE THINGS FOR THEIR OWN PERSONAL GAIN?

HUH? WE'VE STOPPED.

IS THIS THE END OF THE LINE?

OH, NO... WE'LL BE GOING MUCH DEEPER.

"INTO THE CAVERN CITY OF *LECHUGUILLA*...

"BENEATH THAT, THROUGH THE UNDERWATER CITY OF MERAMEC...

"TO OUR FINAL DESTINATION."

THERE. THERE IT IS...

THE GATES OF THE ABANDONED CITY OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.

WE'RE TOO LATE.

THE CITY HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO RISE.

THIS ENTIRE CAVERN IS GOING TO COLLAPSE.

WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.

BEN, WHAT ARE YOU...

STICK AROUND AS LONG AS YOU CAN.

WAIT, BEN... STOP!

SOMETHIN' I GOTTA DO.

SORRY, STRETCH...

URK! What's happenin'?

THIS CITY...IT CHANGES YOU.

Where are the children?

WE KEEP THE ANIMALS IN THEIR PENS...

ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE CITY.

SMASH!

Where is everyone else?

WE'RE ALL THAT'S LEFT.

C'mon...

I'm gettin' you outta here.

HERE THEY COME.

GOOD THING, BECAUSE THE ENTIRE ROOF IS GETTING READY TO COME DOWN!

BEN! WHAT HAPPENED TO...

Later, Suzie... Kids, buckle yourselves in tight.

Reed! Let's go!

WHERE ARE WE GOING TO GO...THE WORLD IS CAVING IN ON...

OH!

REED! LOOK!

MAYBE...

SUE, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED TO SHIELD US.

HERE WE GO.

LATER.

THE MOLE MAN LEFT?

YES. A WHILE AGO... HE SLITHERED BACK BENEATH THE EARTH TO RALLY WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS KINGDOM, I'M SURE.

THIS REALLY IS AMAZING...

WHAT WE THOUGHT WOULD CRACK THE EARTH WAS INSTEAD DESIGNED TO SEAL BEHIND ITSELF, CREATING A SOLID FOUNDATION BENEATH THE CITY AS IT ROSE.

SO, WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NOW?

I'M NOT SURE... ACCUSATIONS, FEAR...POLITICS. NO DOUBT WE'LL BE INVOLVED.

REGARDLESS, THEY'RE HERE TO STAY.

I'M JUST SAYIN'...

Reed says it'll take an hour or so to wear off.

SERIOUSLY, DON'T DISMISS THIS--PEOPLE LOVE MONKEYS... AND IT'S A GOOD LOOK FOR YOU.

Shut up.

DID YOU GET THE CHILDREN SETTLED?

Yeah...

But there's somethin' funny about those kids.

AND WHAT ABOUT THEIR INTENTIONS?

THEY HAVE AN INHUMAN PERSPECTIVE AND AN UNNATURAL LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE, BEN...

THEY ARE A PRODUCT OF THEIR CITY.

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, THEY'RE NOT SO SPECIAL THAT WE WON'T BE ABLE TO HANDLE THEM IF THEY'RE UP TO NO GOOD.

STILL...A MAN-MADE CITY RAISED FROM DEEP WITHIN THE EARTH, RUN BY SUPER-GENIUS DEVOLVED MONSTERS...YOU DON'T SEE THAT EVERY DAY.

Yeah...

Ain't that somethin'?

- ONE HOUR AND TWENTY THREE MINUTES AFTER LEAVING THE CITY, BEN GRIMM REVERTED TO HIS NON-DEVOLVED STATE.

- EXPERIMENTATION CONDUCTED ON THE EDGE OF THE CITY SUGGESTS THAT LEVEL A CONTAINMENT SUITS WILL PREVENT THE EFFECTS OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY'S ASCENSION ENGINE.

- FOUR DAYS AFTER RISING, DIPLOMATIC ENVOYS FROM THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OPENED A DIALOGUE WITH THE "FOREVER CITY OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY" REGARDING TERRITORIAL RIGHTS.

  NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN OVER THE DEMAND FROM FOREVER CITY AMBASSADORS THAT IT BE TREATED AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION-STATE WITHIN THE CONTINENTAL U.S. BORDER.

  CHECKPOINTS WERE CONSTRUCTED TO RESTRICT ACCESS UNTIL A RESOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH PARTIES CAN BE REACHED. MEDIATION CONTINUES.

- AFTER TWO WEEKS, THE MOLOID CHILDREN WHO WERE RESCUED FROM THE CITY SHOW NO SIGNS OF DIMINISHED INTELLIGENCE.

homepad

WHERE THERE IS

WATER AND LIFE LIVED IN IT

THERE ARE

GIANTS

OKAY...I KNOW IT'S TOUGH TO FOCUS WITH SUPER-SMART MOLOID KIDS RUNNING AROUND AND DIGGING INTO EVERYTHING...

BUT PAY ATTENTION, BOYS... OR I'LL SEND YOU TO THE CORNER.

THIS IS VOSTOK STATION.

A RESEARCH FACILITY BUILT BY RUSSIAN EXPLORERS IN THE 1950S. ITS ONLY REMARKABLE TRAIT BEING THAT IT WAS THE MOST ISOLATED BASE IN ALL OF ANTARCTICA.

THE ONLY HOTSPOT IN A COLD AND UNFORGIVING PLACE.

JUMP FORWARD TO 1973 WHEN RADAR IMAGING REVEALED THE LARGEST SUSPENDED BODY OF WATER IN THE ENTIRE CONTINENT SOME 13,000 FEET BENEATH THE SURFACE.

IT'S MASSIVE. BEST ESTIMATES SHOW THE AREA TO BE SOMEWHERE AROUND 6,000 SQUARE MILES. MUCH MORE INTERESTING THAN THAT...*THE POINT* REALLY, IS LAKE VOSTOK HAS BEEN AN ISOLATED HABITAT FOR OVER 500,000 YEARS.

ANY LIFE THAT MAY HAVE FORMED THERE WILL HAVE FOLLOWED A DIVERGENT, BUT PARALLEL, EVOLUTIONARY PATH FROM OUR OWN.

FOR DECADES, BIOLOGISTS AND GEOLOGISTS TRIED, UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO EXPLORE THIS AREA WITH TRADITIONAL METHODS AND EQUIPMENT.

BUT OUTSIDE OF SOME IMPRESSIVE ICE CORE SAMPLES AND INTERESTING THERMAL DATA, THEY HAD NOTHING TO SHOW FOR THEIR EFFORTS.

THEN, FOUR YEARS AGO, A SELECT GROUP OF SCIENTISTS WON A GRANT FROM OUR PRIMARY RESEARCH FOUNDATION AND REED PROVIDED THEM WITH SOME NEXT GENERATION SCANNING EQUIPMENT-- MAKING HIGH-RESOLUTION MAPPING OF THE UNDERGROUND LAKE FROM THE SURFACE POSSIBLE.

AND, AFTER USING IT, THEY FOUND SOMETHING FASCINATING: THERE'S SOME KIND OF SUPERSTRUCTURE AT THE HEART OF LAKE VOSTOK.

AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, AFTER THAT, WE REALLY GOT INVOLVED.

WE BEGAN WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS A METHODICAL AND SYSTEMATIC PLAN FOR SAFELY LAUNCHING A SERIES OF DEEP WATER PROBES BEFORE EVENTUALLY SENDING A MANNED EXPLORATORY TEAM DOWN THERE.

BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, SLOW AND STEADY...

RIGHT! STEADY LIKE A ROCK!

NO, YOU IDIOT... TURTLE.

SLOW AND STEADY LIKE THE TURTLE.

WINS.

THE.

RACE.

IT'S SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE.

FORGET IT. MOVING ON.

JUST CUT TO THE CHASE, SUZIE... TELL US WHY WE'RE HERE.

SOMETHING'S COME UP.

LAST WEEK, I NOTICED A DATA LEAK ON OUR REMOTE MAINFRAME AND DISCOVERED A.I.M. HAD CRACKED OUR SYSTEMS IN ANTARCTICA.

SO WE RE-TASKED A SATELLITE AND DISCOVERED THAT THEY HAD SECRETLY BEEN SLANT DRILLING FROM A LOCATION FIVE MILES AWAY. THEY WANT WHATEVER IS DOWN THERE AS WELL...

AND THEY ARE PREPARING TO LAUNCH EXPLORATORY VEHICLES IN THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

MEANING THAT IF WE WANT TO GET THERE FIRST, OUR SCIENCE TEAM AT THE SOUTH POLE NO LONGER HAS THE LUXURY OF SENDING DOWN PROBES...

THIS IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE A MANNED MISSION FROM THE GET-GO...

...AND I VOLUNTEERED US.

WHY?

BECAUSE IS THERE ANYTHING WE DO BETTER THAN EXPLORATION?

BEAT PEOPLE UP?

DATE HOT WOMEN?

WE LEAVE IN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES.

CRASH

FOUR HOURS LATER.

DID SOMEONE ORDER PIZZA?

THE DISCOVERY BUILDING. FUTURE FOUNDATION. VOSTOK EXPLORATORY STATION [PROJECT 2B]

HELLO, DOCTOR.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, SUSAN.

REED, THIS IS DR. CALVIN COOLEY. CAL, THIS IS MY HUSBAND, REED.

HI.

IT'S AN HONOR, DR. RICHARDS. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR PROVIDING ALL OF THIS.

NO, NO...DON'T THANK ME. I'M ALWAYS IN THE LAB COMING UP WITH THE NEXT THING. IT'S SUSAN WHO HANDLES ALL THE DAY-TO-DAY RUNNING OF THE FOUNDATION.

YOU KNOW, I REALLY DON'T GET OUT ENOUGH... THIS IS A VERY COOL PLACE YOU'VE GOT HERE.

YES, IT IS...HOW MUCH LONGER UNTIL WE CAN LAUNCH, CAL?

OH, WE'RE READY NOW...

BUT THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS THAT CONCERN US.

THE POD WILL HAVE TO BREAK THROUGH AN ICE SHIELD TO REACH THE LAKE. THIS IS WITHIN ITS STRUCTURAL LIMITS, BUT IT'S TWO THINGS HITTING EACH OTHER AT HIGH SPEED, SO IT'S GOT US A BIT ANXIOUS.

WHAT'S REALLY GOT US WORRIED IS THE MASSIVE THERMAL VENT DOWN THERE-- IT'S GOING TO BE LOUD.

WAY TOO LOUD FOR YOU TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR HEADGEAR AND THERE'S NO TIME FOR A WORK-AROUND.

WE THINK YOU SHOULD SCRAP THE MISSION--THE CONDITIONS ARE TOO DANGEROUS...

BUT IT'S YOUR MONEY AND YOU GOING DOWN THERE...SO IT'S YOUR CALL, SUSAN.

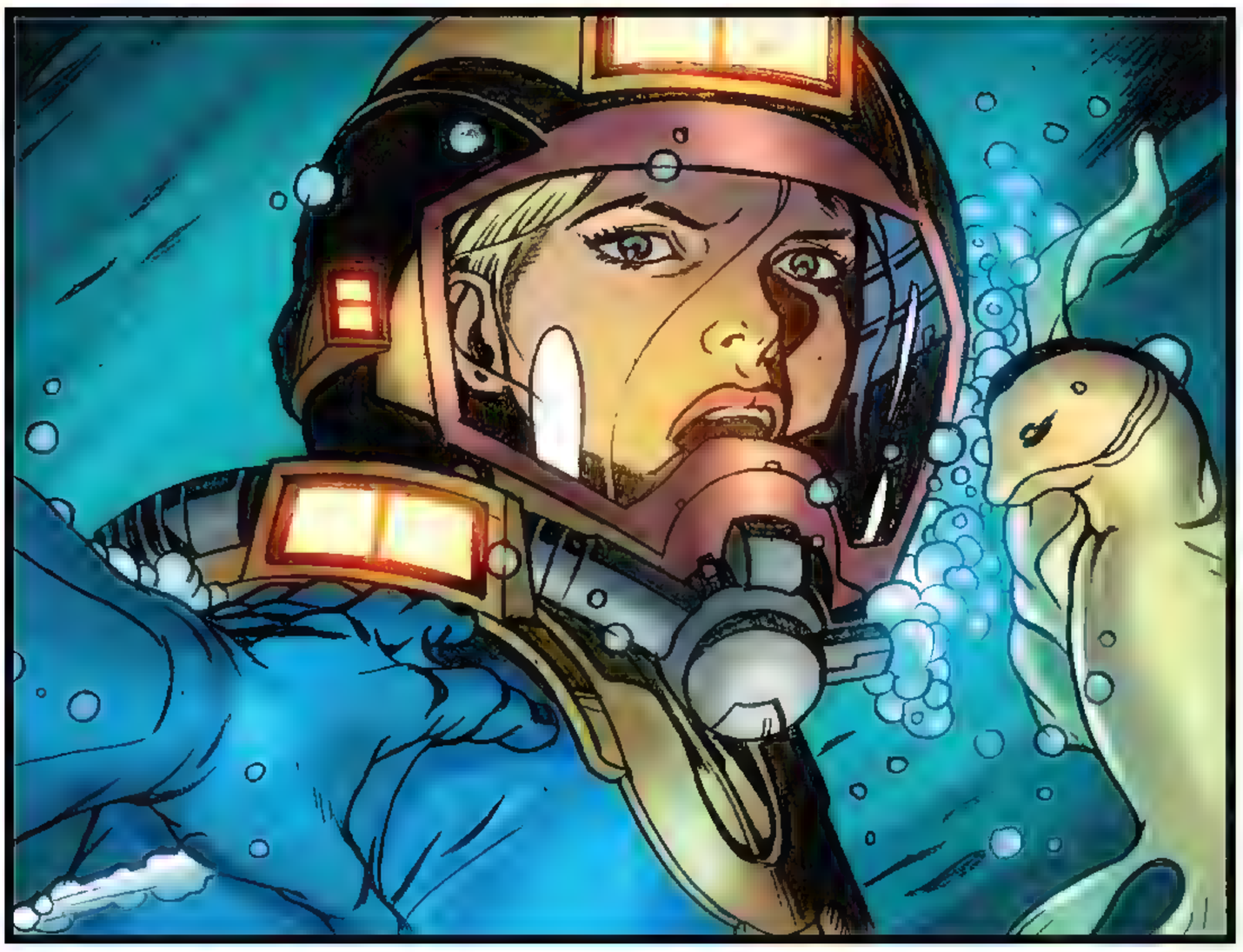
LET'S GO FOR A SWIM.

4 30 MINUTES LATER.

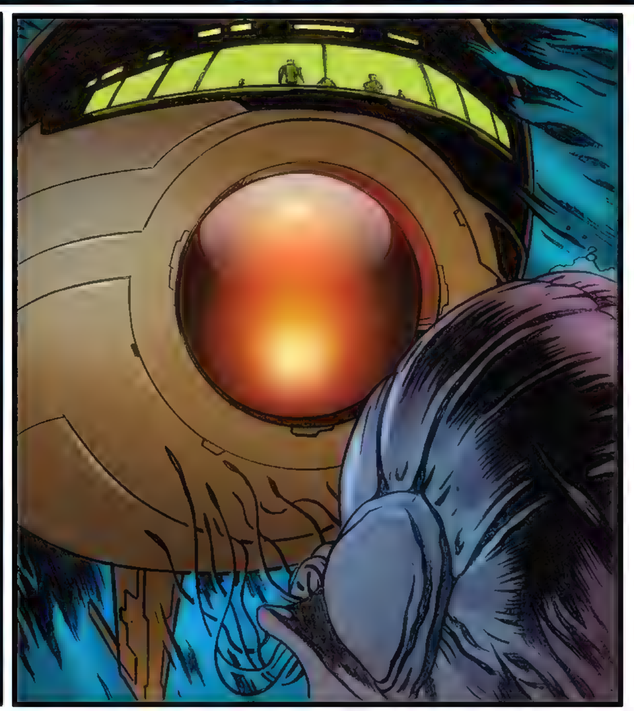
82.25 METERS PER SECOND. UPPER LIMIT OF RATE OF DESCENT ACHIEVED. APPROACHING ICE SHIELD.

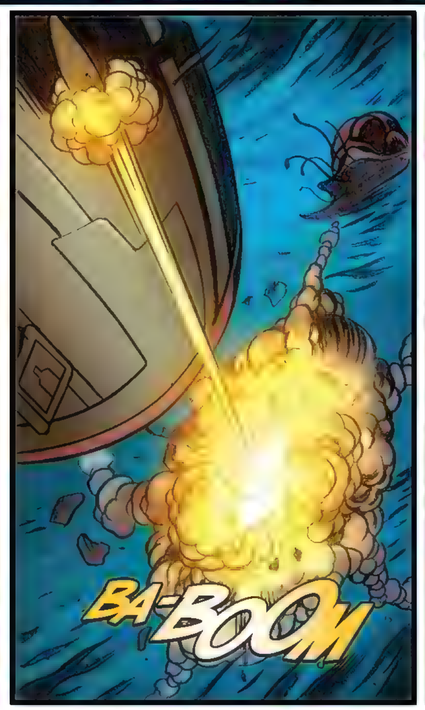
IMPACT IN THREE... TWO...

CRASH!



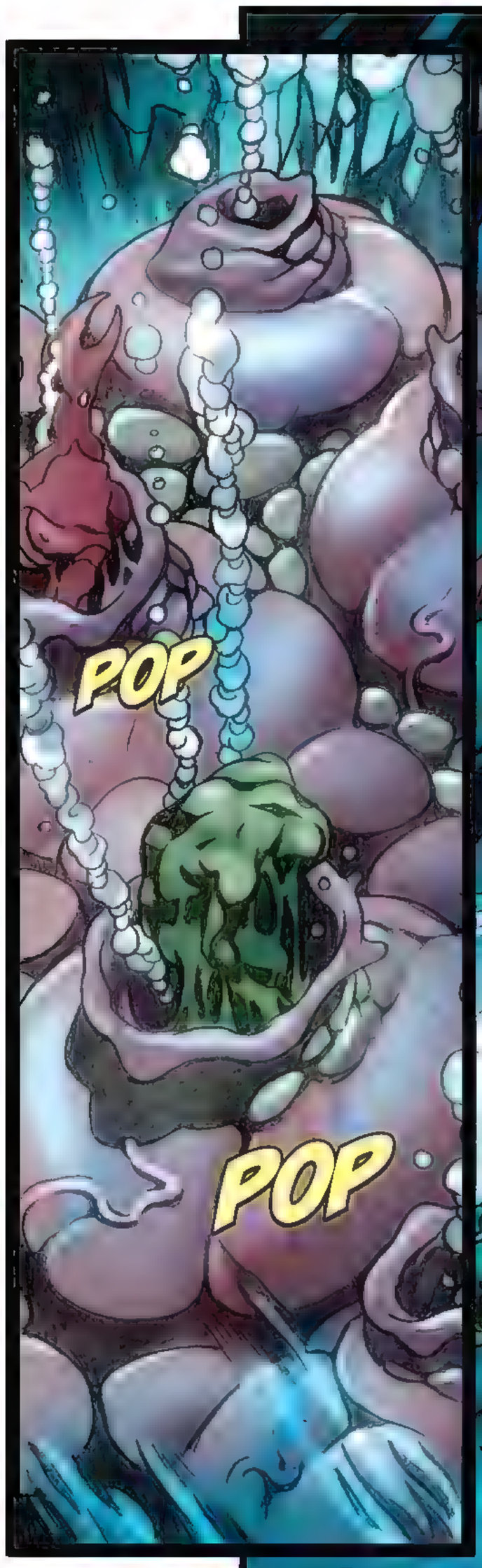
RRRUUUWWWWWWBBLLEEE




BA-BOOM

HHHHHHMMMMMMM

HHHHHHHMMMMMMM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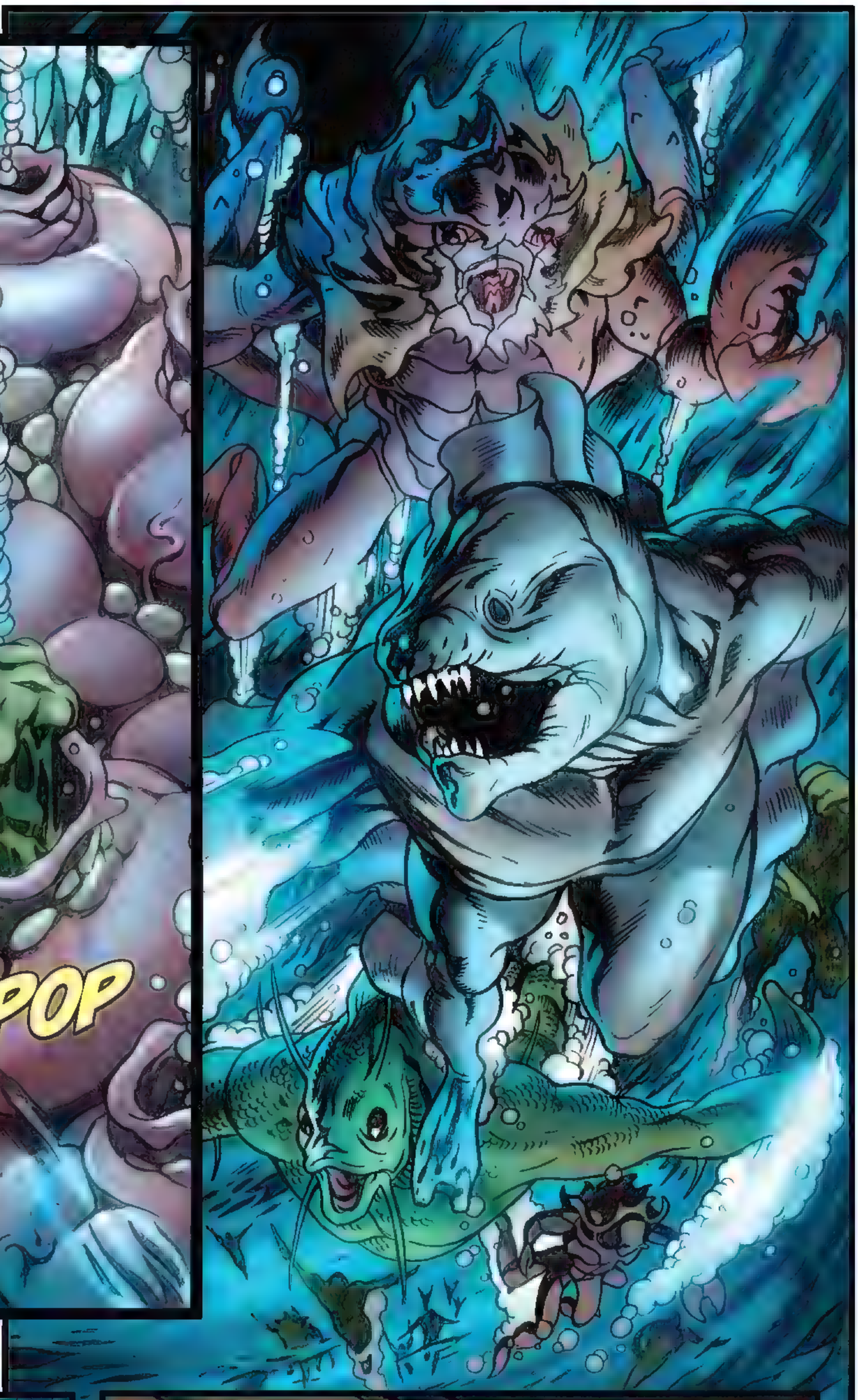
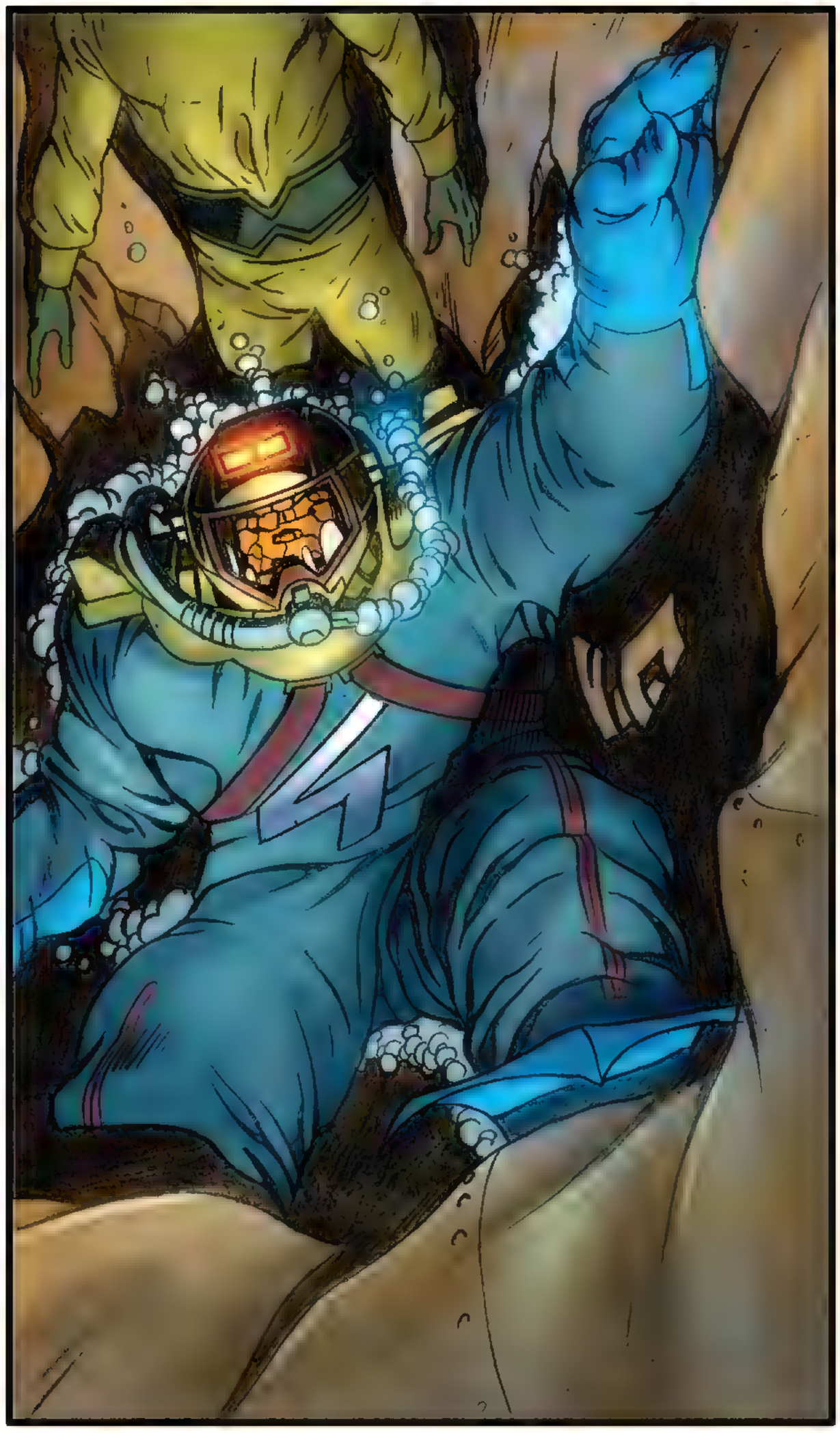
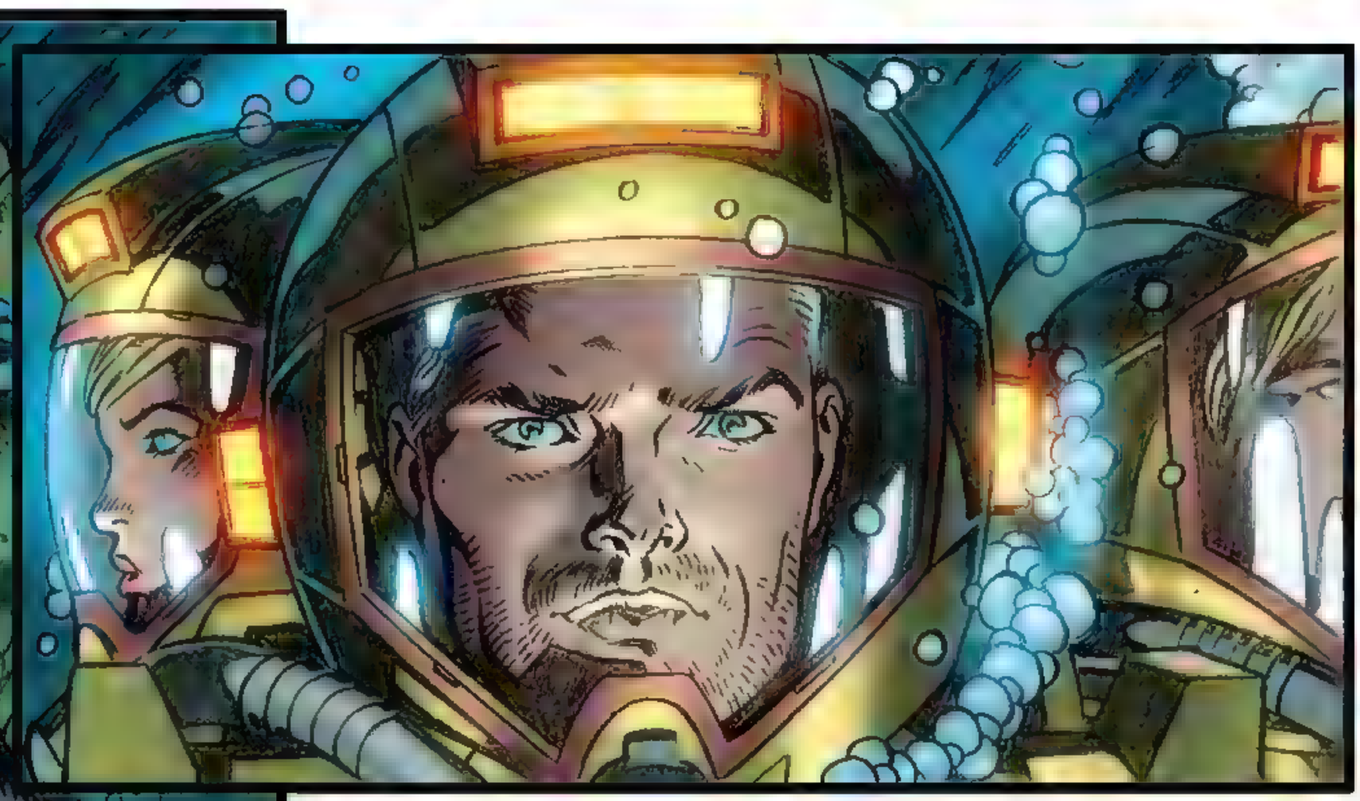


BA-BOOM

CRASH





AMAZING...

IT'S SOME KIND OF TELEPATHIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE.

DON'T CARE.

I LOOK RIDICULOUS.

MORE RIDICULOUS...

YOU LOOK MORE RIDICULOUS.

SO...WHERE DO YOU THINK THEY'RE...

...TAKING US?

IT'S LIKE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SUSHI BAR.

THAT IS NOT A GOOD LOOK, PAL.

HEY, JOHNNY... ROYALTY.

BRING THEM FORWARD.

I AM UL-UHAR, REGENT OF THE PEAK. KING OF THE UHARI.

WELCOME TO THE KINGDOM OF ATLANTIS.

ATLANTIS?
THIS ISN'T ATLANTIS, IT'S DESTROYED... RUINS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD.
ATLANTIS IS THE SEA, BOY.
WHERE THERE IS WATER AND LIFE LIVED IN IT, THERE ARE GIANTS.
THIS IS SIMPLY THE WAY THINGS ARE.
BUT WE ARE CONFUSED. YOU BOTH CAME FROM ABOVE.
YOU...AND THEY...ARE THE SAME.
YET THEY CAME HERE TO DO VIOLENCE AND YOU TRIED TO STOP THEM. HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOU SEE EVIDENCE OF THREE RACES BEFORE YOU. THE ONLY THREE THAT SURVIVED THE GREAT FALL.
WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN CULTURES... WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN RULERS. BUT AT TIMES--TIMES LIKE THESE--ONE PERSON HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SPEAK FOR ALL.
SO, I REPRESENT THE KINGDOM AND ALL ITS PEOPLE--IF NOT YOU, THEN TELL ME, WHO SPEAKS FOR MAN'?
NO. THAT'S SIMPLY NOT HOW OUR SOCIETY WORKS. WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT--THAT ROLE--DOESN'T EXIST. HUMANITY IS NOT A COLLECTIVE.
THERE ISN'T A SINGLE...WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT NO ONE WOULD EVER...
I WILL.
WHAT?!

I WILL BE THE VOICE OF MAN.

SUSAN, IT'S NOT YOUR...

IT'S WHAT THEY UNDERSTAND...

AND YOU KNOW WHY IT HAS TO BE ME.

COME FORWARD AND TELL US WHO YOU ARE.

I AM SUSAN STORM RICHARDS.

AND NOW, SO MUCH MORE.

SUSAN OF THE RICHARDS, SUSAN OF THE STORM... ENVOY OF MAN AND EMISSARY OF THE PEAK.

RETURN FROM WHERE YOU CAME, AND SPREAD THE WORD...

THE *OLD KINGS* OF ATLANTIS HAVE RETURNED.

IF EVER WE ARE NEEDED, IF EVER THERE IS CAUSE FOR CONTACT, THERE IS ONE PERSON WITH WHOM THEY NEED SPEAK.

AND IN THESE HALLS, HER NAME WILL ALWAYS ECHO OUT.

I AM SUSAN RICHARDS.

AND I SPEAK FOR ALL MANKIND.

- BEFORE LEAVING THE PEAK, SUSAN RICHARDS WAS GIVEN AN ACCESS DEVICE -- THE SPIRAL -- TO BE USED IF COMMUNICATION WAS DESIRED BY EITHER PARTY.

- THE OLD KINGDOM IS SUPPORTED BY A HYDRO-DYNAMIC APPARATUS POWERED BY LAKE VOSTOK'S INTERNAL CURRENT, WHICH IS A RESULT OF THE ICE SHELF ABOVE AND THE THERMAL VENT BELOW.

- THE THREE RACES THAT EXIST IN THE OLD KINGDOM ARE THE UHARI (FISH-LIKE IN APPEARANCE), THE CHORDAI (EEL-LIKE IN APPEARANCE), AND THE MALA (CRAB-LIKE IN APPEARANCE).

  TRADITIONALLY, THE UHARI ARE A WORKER CLASS, THE MALA ARE A LEGAL CLASS, AND THE CHORDAI ARE A WARRIOR CLASS.

- SOON AFTER LEAVING ANTARCTICA, SUSAN RICHARDS TOOK THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS ACHIEVING WHAT SHE HOPED WOULD BE A PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY OF ALL UNDERSEA CULTURES BY CONTACTING KING NAMOR VIA UTOPIA.

  NAMOR HAS YET TO RESPOND.

BUT THE SUPREMOR YOU SEE... HE HAD OTHER PLANS

4 SIX MONTHS AGO.
THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON.

IT IS TIME.

WHAT FOLLOWS WILL BE A DELICATE PERIOD--*ALL THINGS* LIE IN FLUX.

EVEN AS THE TIME OF *GATHERING* DRAWS NEAR, CIRCUMSTANCES FORCE US AWAY... SO SOMEONE MUST STAY BEHIND

OF ALL *INHUMANS*, YOU WERE CHOSEN.

I AM YOUR WAYFINDER, MY LORD.

BLACK BOLT HAS A SAYING. MAY NEVER A WORD BE UTTERED WHEN ACTION ALONE WILL DO.

THIS IS A *SUMMONING.*

THOOM!

TWO MONTHS AGO.

CLOSER...

YESTERDAY.

LOOK UP, WATCHER.

IT IS INDEED A TIME OF CHANGE

"SIX HOURS..."

THAT'S HOW LONG AGO THIS LONG-RANGE PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY A FOUNDATION SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE IN LUNAR ORBIT.

IT LANDED IN THE BLUE AREA ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON...SO WE'VE GOT THIS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE.

QUESTIONS?

ANY IDEA WHAT IT IS?

BASED ON ITS PROFILE, MY FIRST GUESS WOULD BE AN EXPLORATION OR COLONIZATION VESSEL...

I SUPPOSE IT COULD BE A MINING OPERATION... HELIUM-3, MAYBE...

I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW.

OH, I KNOW WHERE THIS IS HEADED.

ONE SMALL STEP...

EXACTLY.

WHO'S UP FOR A WALK ON THE MOON?

30 MINUTES LATER.

HERE WE GO...

FIRST STAGE SEPARATION IN TWENTY-FIVE SECONDS, BEN...

HEH. JUST LIKE OLD TIMES.

LATER.
LUNAR ORBIT.

THERE IT IS.

UH, HOW COULD WE MISS IT?

I'M READING FOUR MASSIVE POWER SOURCES FEEDING INTO WHAT LOOKS LIKE PRIMARY ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS AND AN INTERDEPENDENT PROPULSION SYSTEM.

THERE ARE... TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SMALLER HEAT SIGNATURES. JOHNNY?

UH-HUH. GOT THE SAME. MAYBE MORE.

WHATEVER IS IN THERE, THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF IT.

SO, HOW DO WE GET IN?

FOR HONORED GUESTS SUCH AS THE FANTASTIC FOUR, I'D SIMPLY RECOMMEND THE DOOR.

WHO...?

I AM DAL DAMOC...THE WAYFINDER, LOYAL SERVANT AND PROXY FOR OUR KING, BLACK BOLT, DURING HIS ABSENCE FROM THIS SYSTEM.

I AM THE SUMMONER.

THE HERALD OF A NEW INHUMAN AGE.

WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSAL CITY.

GREAT. JUST WHAT WE NEED... ANOTHER STUPID CITY.

HEY!

WHAT YOU'RE STANDING ON, I CAN SEE IT...YOU'VE CONSTRUCTED A PERPETUAL MOTION **PLANAR CONSTRUCT** THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE CONSTANT THOUGHT. IT'S SO SIMPLE...

WHY HAVEN'T I EVER THOUGHT OF THAT?

I THINK THE BETTER QUESTION IS WHY WOULD A WOMAN SUCH AS YOURSELF EVER LET HER FEET TOUCH THE GROUND?

BETTER?

GREAT.

CAN WE GO INSIDE NOW?

FOLLOW ME.

I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY.

THE SIZE OF THIS VESSEL IS STAGGERING...

WHAT RACE CREATED IT?

RACES, DR. RICHARDS.... RACES.

WHEN THE FOUR BECAME ONE, A NEW MONOCULTURE OF DESTINY WAS CREATED, INDIVIDUAL ROLES WERE REDEFINED.

WHAT A PERSON USED TO BE, NO LONGER MATTERED... NOW YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, "HOW DO I BEST SERVE THE UNIVERSAL COLLECTIVE?"

HERE IS ONE ANSWER.

HE IS ELDRAC, THE DOORWAY.

ONCE A POLITICIAN FOR A MINOR FACTION, HE BECAME IRRELEVANT DURING UNIFICATION.

NOW HE SERVES AS THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN THIS PLACE AND ALL OTHERS.

AMAZING.

NECESSARY. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR REDUNDANCY HERE.

I TAKE IT YOU'RE AWARE OF THE ORIGINS OF THE INHUMANS?

OF COURSE.

THEN YOU KNOW, ALL OF THIS STARTED WITH THE KREE...

"...AND THEIR EXPERIMENTATION ON EARLY HUMANS--HOMO ANTECESSOR--BECAUSE OF MAN'S UNIQUE GENETIC POTENTIAL."

YES. AN OBSERVATION THE KREE MADE FROM THEIR PARALLAX-CLASS SCIENCE BASE THAT WAS LOCATED ON URANUS. I'M WELL AWARE OF...

WHAT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW--WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW, DR. RICHARDS--IS THAT THIS KREE EXPERIMENTATION WAS NOT CARRIED OUT FROM A SINGLE BASE AND ON A SINGLE SPECIES, BUT ON MANY BASES AND ON MANY SPECIES.

SUCCESS... WAS ACHIEVED WITH *FIVE.*

FIVE?

"THE COMMON BELIEF, ONE SHARED BY ALMOST ALL KREE ELITE IN THE SACRED HALLS OF HALA, WAS THAT THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE WAS DOING THIS TO BUILD SENTIENT WEAPONS.

"BUT THE SUPREMOR, YOU SEE... HE HAD OTHER PLANS--SECRET PLANS INVOLVING THE LONG VIEW OF THE KREE RACE."

HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN SIMPLY PLAYING GOD AT THE BASE GENETIC LEVEL OF VARIOUS SPECIES. HE WAS INTERESTED IN TRANSFORMATION.

A RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC CATALYST.

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT TERRIGENESIS.

"YES. FOR US, THAT CATALYST WAS EXPOSURE TO THE MISTS OF THE TERRIGEN CRYSTALS.

"FOR OTHERS, IT WAS SOMETHING ELSE."

"ONE RACE UNDERWENT ***ISOGENESIS***, CAUSED BY INJECTING THE EXTRACT OF THE ISOGEN ORBS.

"FOR ANOTHER, ONE DROP OF THE IRREPLACEABLE, DILUTED WATER FROM THE DORMANT AMPHOGEN WELL CAUSED ***AMPHOGENESIS***.

"AND IN ANOTHER, ***ANTIGENESIS*** BROUGHT ON BY CONSUMING THE NECTAR OF THE NIGHTBLOOMS FROM THE ANTIGEN TREE.

"AND THEN THERE WAS THE ETERNAL CHANGE-- ***EXOGENESIS***--THAT COMES FROM INHALING THE EXOGEN SPICE."

THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE INTENDED FOR US TO BE SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST WEAPONS, HE INTENDED FOR US TO BE A FERTILE SOIL...

A GENETIC HARVESTING GROUND.

A WAY TO REIGNITE STAGNANT KREE EVOLUTION.

WE GOT COMPANY!

EASY, BEN.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND? TOGETHER, WITH WE EARTHBOUND *INHUMANS*, THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY REPRESENT SALVATION FOR A DYING RACE.

OH, MY GOD...

YOU'RE BEGINNING TO SENSE THE SCOPE OF IT, AREN'T YOU?

EVEN NOW, BLACK BOLT RETURNS TO CLOSE THE CIRCLE. THE INHUMANS OF ATTILAN TRAVEL TO THE HOMEWORLD, HALA.

TO SAVE THE *KREE*?

TO CRUSH THEM UNDER HIS HEEL.

WHATEVER THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE INTENDED, BLACK BOLT WILL LEAD US ON A NEW PATH.

WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, A TRIBE UNTO OURSELVES.

THE UNIVERSAL INHUMANS.

OH, BOY.

"AND WHILE OUR COLLECTIVE RULES JOINTLY, EACH HOUSE RETAINS A SEPARATE STRUCTURE UNIQUE UNTO ITSELF.

"THE CENTAURIAN ROYAL FAMILY IS LED BY THE MATRIARCH OOLA UDONTA.

"THE RULING MOORD COUNCIL IS PRESIDED OVER BY THE BADOON QUEEN, ALADI KO EKE.

"ONOMI WHITEMANE IS FIRST CHAIR OF THE KYMELLIAN WHITE ROOM.

"AND THE GODDESS AVOE RULES THE DIRE WRAITHS."

THOUGH WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT, WITHIN EACH OF US LIES A DISTINCT GENETIC MARKER... SOMETHING WE ALL SHARE.

YOU SEE, WE WERE CONSTRUCTED WITH A DORMANT MYTHOLOGY-- SHARED VISUAL IMPRINTS LEFT BY THOSE WHO MADE US.

A GROUP MEMORY?

A DESTINY, HUMAN.

FIVE QUEENS FOR THE ONE KING.

THE ONE KING WHO RETURNS FROM THE FOREVER NIGHT.

AND UNDER HIS BANNER WE WILL CLAIM OUR HOLY LAND, NEW HALA.

SO YOU SEE, DR. RICHARDS, BLACK BOLT IS RETURNING SOON...AND THEN, AS FORETOLD, WE WILL ALL BE TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME.

A NEW PEOPLE IN A NEW LAND.

HERE...ON THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON?

NO... SOMEPLACE BETTER.

OH, NO...

"NOW GO, AND SPREAD THE WORD OF HIS COMING RETURN."

- THERE ARE ROUGHLY ONE HUNDRED AND TEN THOUSAND CITIZENS LIVING ON THE INHUMAN CITY-SHIP. POPULATION ESTIMATES ARE:

  - 22,000 CENTAURIANS (11,500 MALE, 10,500 FEMALE)
  - 17,250 BADOON (9,250 MALE, 8,000 FEMALE)
  - 26,250 KYMELLIANS (13,000 MALE, 13,250 FEMALE)
  - 44,500 DIRE WRAITHS (31,250 MALE, 13,250 FEMALE)

- THERE ARE CURRENTLY 726 INHUMAN PRISONERS LOCATED ON THE BLACK LEVEL OF THE CITY-SHIP.

- THE LIGHT BRIGADE IS AN ELITE GROUP COMPRISED OF THE SIX GREATEST INHUMAN WARRIORS. EACH LIGHT BRIGADE IS FORMED TO TAKE PART IN A RITUAL CALLED THE OFFERING.

  THE OFFERING TAKES PLACE ONCE EVERY GENERATION. DURING THE CEREMONY, THE LIGHT BRIGADE TAKES ON AN ENDLESS SUCCESSION OF TRIALS IN ORDER TO INTERNALLY PROVE THE WORTHINESS OF THE INHUMAN COLLECTIVE. THE OFFERING ENDS WITH THE DEATH OF THE LAST LIVING MEMBER OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

  NO LIGHT BRIGADE HAS EVER SURVIVED LONGER THAN A YEAR.

OUR MOST VALIANT
OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS

"EXACTLY WHY AM I TELLING YOU THIS AGAIN?"

"I DID ASK NICELY."

"FINE. EVERYTHING SEEMED COMPLETELY NORMAL.

"NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY AT ALL.

EXIT

SO...

MAYBE WE COULD GO BACK TO YOUR PLACE?

SURE.

I'LL DRIVE.

"AND THIS WAS WHERE?"

"A NEW PLACE...

"SOME STATE-OF-THE-ART CHAIN CLUB.

BEHOLD! THE WORDS OF THE ANTI-PRIEST:

EQUILIBRIUM AND THERMODYNAMICS HAVE LEFT YOU WITH NO OTHER CHOICE...

"IT WAS AN ALL-INCLUSIVE PERFORMANCE ART/SPA/SELF-HELP SHRINE/BAR CALLED *THE OTHER SIDE OF ZERO.*

DO YOU WANT TO BE A SLAVE TO FATE...A SERVANT TO YOUR EVENTUAL DEMISE?

OR DO YOU WANT *NEW RULES* FOR A *NEW LIFE?*

"THE SCENE WAS WEIRD AND DEAD, SO WE CAME HERE..."

BOOP!
WANT A DRINK?
NO.
SUIT YOURSELF...
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE BAXTER BUILDING?
VERY COOL.
I LOVE GADGETS.
THERE YOU ARE.
I CAN FEEL THE CONNECTION... MAKING SOMETHING MOVE IN ME.
THEN YOU'RE DEFINITELY IN THE RIGHT PLACE.
AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THE VIEW FROM MY ROOM...
AH.
NATASHA?
HEY!
GET AWAY FROM THERE!
THAT'S THE ***NEGATIVE ZONE*** PORTAL! YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW DANGEROUS THAT THING IS!
OF COURSE I DO...IT'S WHY I'M ***HERE***.
WHAT?
CRAK

THEY KNEW YOU'D BE AT THE CLUB THIS EVENING... AND BECAUSE OF *THAT*, AND BECAUSE I'M *BEAUTIFUL*, THEY CHOSE *ME*.

WE'RE PREDICTABLE BECAUSE WE'RE SO SIMPLE, JOHNNY.

YOU JUST WANT TO ENJOY LIFE...

AND I JUST WANT TO DIE.

HHMMMMMMMM

SEE, THERE'S A NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.

FROM A DENSE, HOT STATE OUR REALITY EXPLODED INTO EXISTENCE. BUT AS SOON AS IT WAS BORN, OUR UNIVERSE BEGAN DYING.

AND THE SLOW, AGONIZING EXTINCTION SPIRAL CALLED *EXPANSION* WILL END IN THE HEAT DEATH OF *EVERYTHING*.

BUT THROUGH THIS GATE, THE NATURAL ORDER IS REVERSED.

HERE, YOU *DIE*. IN THE *NEGATIVE ZONE*, YOU CAN *LIVE*.

THE ANTI-PRIEST TAUGHT ME THIS AND I BELIEVE HIM.

HE PUT A WORD IN ME. A SECRET WORD...

THIS IS A NEW AGE.

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR...?

HEAR...

HEAR...

IT...

OH, #%$@

AH

NIGH

HU

LUUUH

SSSSS

URK!

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

BLOOP

[illegible]

OKAY...

JOHNNY GOES TO BAR. JOHNNY GETS GIRL. GIRL TURNS OUT TO BE A BUG MONSTER. BUG MONSTER DISAPPEARS THROUGH THE HOLE. JOHNNY NEVER KISSED THE BUG.

I'M GOING TO CALL THAT A WIN.

BLOOOP.

NO. DON'T SHUT DOWN THE PORTAL...

I'M GOING IN AFTER THEM.

BORP!

YEAH? AND DID YOU SEE THAT DEVICE ONE OF THEM WAS HOLDING?

WHAT DID IT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

BOOOP.

IT MOST DEFINITELY WAS A BOMB.

JUST HOLD THE GATE OPEN FOR FIVE MINUTES. OKAY?

MY MESS... I'M GONNA FIX IT.

BLOP.

RELAX. I'M GOING TO MAKE FLAMEBAIT OF FIVE BUGS AND I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

NO PROBLEM.

I'M AN IDIOT...

GENERAL-- THE ARMADA OF ANNIHILUS.

BAH!

LET THE HIVE SWARM...THE COSMIC CONTROL ROD POWERS OUR DEFENSES, AND THERE IS NO WAY THROUGH OUR SHIELDS.

HEY! LOOK OUT! STOP THEM!

THEY'VE GOT A BOMB!

UFFF!

WHAT...

NOOO!

BA-BBBOOOM!!

ШШНН.

ƎWM
!IO ΩXZ
!ΣHOM.

MOXX
ΣΣ ƎXMΣ
!ΣMX

AH
NIGH
HUH
OH, SHUT IT.

SQQUEEEE!!

SQQUEEEE!!

SQQUEEEE!!

UH-OH.

- THE OTHER SIDE OF ZERO IS THE RECRUITMENT ARM FOR AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE CULT OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE.

- THE MARK III NEGATIVE ZONE PORTAL POSSESSES THE FOLLOWING FEATURES AND IMPROVEMENTS: A FASTER BOOT CYCLE, EMERGENCY TRANSPARENT VIBRANIUM SHIELDING, AND A DECOMPRESSION BUFFER.

- THE ANNIHILATION WAVE ARMADA HAS BEEN REBUILT TO PRE-CRUNCH ASSAULT LEVELS.

- A STATE OF WAR EXISTS BETWEEN THE FORCES OF THE REBORN ANNIHILUS AND BLASTAAR, SELF-DESCRIBED KING OF THE NEGATIVE ZONE.

- THE LEVEL 42 NEGATIVE ZONE PRISON STATION HAS BEEN EXPANDED INTO A...

...WHAT WAS THAT AGAIN?

I SAID, THEY'VE EXPANDED THE NEGATIVE ZONE PRISON INTO A CITY.

AND THAT MAKES FOUR.

I GUESS THAT'S SETTLED.

WHAT?

NOTHING. WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

WELL, CONSIDERING I DIDN'T STOP THE BUGS FROM SETTING OFF THE BOMB, THE ANNIHILATION WAVE WAS POURING INTO THE BASE, AND MY FIVE MINUTES WAS ALMOST UP...

I ACCEPTED THAT IT WAS NOT MY DAY AND GOT THE HECK OUT OF DODGE.

"ANY PROBLEMS THERE?"

"NOT REALLY."

CLOSE IT!

CLOSE IT NOW!

WHY ARE YOU SO INTERESTED IN ALL THIS, VAL?

YOU KNOW ME, UNCLE JOHNNY... GOTTA KEEP LEARNING. GOTTA FEED THE BEAST.

UH-HUH.

YOU SURE THERE ISN'T SOMETHING WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT?

HOW WOULD I KNOW SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

AND SOUTH OF THE BAXTER BUILDING, THE HERALD OF MAN ESCORTS AN ENVOY TO THE PEAK.

ANDROMEDA ATTUMASEN-- ANDROMEDA THE SWORD-- COMES WITH A MESSAGE FROM NAMOR.

WHO ARE YOU TO CALL YOURSELF KINGS?

YOU DARE...

RUMBLE

"WHO CALLS HIMSELF KING THAT HAS NEVER FELT THE SUN ON HIS FACE?

"...THAT COWERS UNDER THE ICE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD?

"...THAT SLEEPS THROUGH THE AGE OF MAN?

"THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS THAT NAMOR--PRINCE OF THE OCEAN, LORD OF THE SEA--HAS FOR YOU SO-CALLED KINGS...

"WHEN YOU HAVE ANSWERS FOR HIM--
WHEN YOU COME OUT OF HIDING--HE
WILL MEET YOU THEN."

LATER.
THE BAXTER BUILDING.

GOT A MINUTE?

REED, YEAH, SURE.

WELL?

...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING.

YOU SHOULD HAVE COME TO GET ME OR BEN...

WE DON'T DO THESE THINGS ALONE... AND WE DON'T DO THEM IN A WAY THAT ENDANGERS OTHERS.

I KNOW, IT'S JUST THAT IT WAS MY FAULT IT HAPPENED. I WAS ANGRY AND WANTED TO...

...

OH, MAN, I CAN'T BELIEVE...I LEFT THE PORTAL OPEN...

AND ALL THE KIDS WERE IN THE BUILDING...

GOD, I REALLY AM SORRY, REED.

HEY, I LOVE THAT YOU DIVE IN HEAD FIRST, JOHNNY...WE ALL DO.

BUT YOU HAVE TO START PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT'S GOING ON.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

EVERYTHING IS CHANGING, JOHNNY.

EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE.

BEN, SUE...THE KIDS.

I'M NOT SURE IF I EVEN HAVE THE WORDS TO EXPLAIN WHAT I'M GOING THROUGH...

AND AS EVERYTHING CHANGES AROUND YOU, IT'S INEVITABLE THAT YOU'LL EXPERIENCE SOMETHING LIKE THIS AS WELL.

AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN THAT HAPPENS, REED?

IT'S SIMPLE, JOHNNY.

YOU ASK YOURSELF A QUESTION...

"WHAT IS IT YOU *STAND* FOR?

"WHEN YOU CAN ANSWER THAT, THEN YOU'LL KNOW."

AND IN THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON, A RITUAL OF IMMOLATION:

THE OFFERING.

FIVE BRIDES AND ONE KING, LET THE NUMBER BE *SIX*.

SIX WARRIORS FOR *SACRIFICE*.

THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

"HOW CAN WE CLAIM A WORLD IF WE ARE NOT WORTHY?

"AND HOW CAN WE BE WORTHY IF WE HAVEN'T ATTEMPTED THE IMPOSSIBLE?"

ELDRAC... GIVE US A BATTLE THAT WE CANNOT WIN.

"THE BLOOD-PRICE WILL BE PAID... THE *VERY BEST* WE HAVE TO OFFER:

"OUR MOST VALIANT.

"OUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS."

AND SO, IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE, THE WAR OF FOUR CITIES BEGINS.

EAGLE 2010

COVER GALLERY

DARK REIGN: FANTASTIC FOUR #1 COVER

SIMONE BIANCHI & SIMONE PERUZZI

DARK REIGN: FANTASTIC FOUR #2 COVER **PASQUAL FERRY & DAVE McCAIG**

DARK REIGN: FANTASTIC FOUR #3 COVER

PASQUAL FERRY & DAVE McCAIG

DARK REIGN: FANTASTIC FOUR #4 COVER **PASQUAL FERRY & DAVE McCAIG**

DARK REIGN: FANTASTIC FOUR #5 COVER **PASQUAL FERRY & DAVE McCAIG**

FANTASTIC FOUR #570 COVER **ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & DAVE McCAIG**

FANTASTIC FOUR #571 COVER

ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & DAVE McCAIG

FANTASTIC FOUR #572 COVER

ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & DAVE McCAIG

FANTASTIC FOUR #573 COVER **ALAN DAVIS & JOHN RAUCH**

FANTASTIC FOUR #574 COVER **ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ**

FANTASTIC FOUR #575 COVER

ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & JAVIER RODRIGUEZ

FANTASTIC FOUR #576 COVER **ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ**

FANTASTIC FOUR #577 COVER **ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ**

FANTASTIC FOUR #578 COVER

ALAN DAVIS, MARK FARMER & JAVIER RODRÍGUEZ

DARK REIGN: THE CABAL #1 COVER **DANIEL ACUÑA**

DARK REIGN FANTASTIC FOUR #1 70TH ANNIVERSARY VARIANT

PASQUAL FERRY & DAVE McCAIG

THE THING

EST. 1961

FANTASTIC FOUR #570 70TH ANNIVERSARY FRAME VARIANT

DALE EAGLESHAM & PAUL MOUNTS

FANTASTIC FOUR #570 SKETCH VARIANT **JOHN CASSADAY**

FANTASTIC FOUR #570 VARIANT **JOHN CASSADAY & LAURA MARTIN**

FANTASTIC FOUR #574 VARIANT **DALE EAGLESHAM & PAUL MOUNTS**

FANTASTIC FOUR #575 WOMEN OF MARVEL CELEBRATING SEVEN DECADES VARIANT

JELENA KEVIC DJURDJEVIC

LEGENDARY WRITER JONATHAN HICKMAN'S SPRAWLING, LANDMARK RUN BEGINS HERE!

Dark Reign strikes Marvel's first family in an explosive way — with H.A.M.M.E.R. agents attacking the Baxter Building! But as Reed Richards builds a bridge across the Multiverse to learn how to solve everything, he finds more than he bargained for. What is the Council? The FF deal with the Wizard and the Mole Man; a familiar visitor arrives from the future with a mysterious message; and the team journeys deep beneath the Earth, under the sea and to the moon — where they learn a startling secret about the history of the Inhumans. It's superior super-hero storytelling as only Jonathan Hickman can deliver it!

T+

MARVEL

Collecting *Dark Reign: Fantastic Four #1-5*, *Fantastic Four (1998) #570-578* and material from *Dark Reign: The Cabal* — written by Jonathan Hickman; and illustrated by Sean Chen, Adi Granov, Dale Eaglesham and Neil Edwards.

ZONE